

BESIDE STILL WATERS

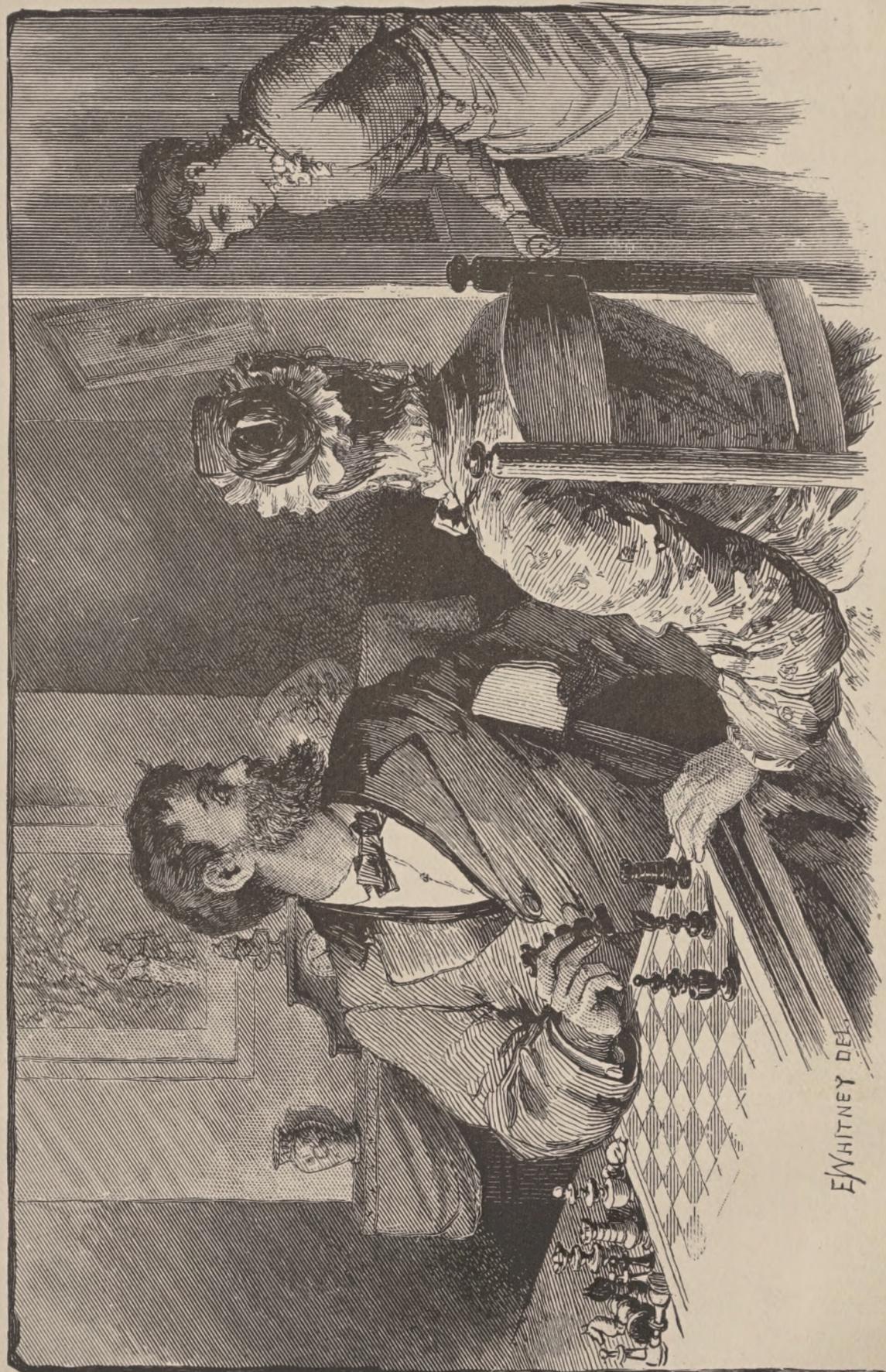
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Beside Still Waters. FRONTISPICE.

BESIDE STILL WATERS;

OR,

LEAVES FROM A JOURNAL.

BY

ELLA CLIFFORD.

35



AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,

150 NASSAU STREET, NEW YORK.

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BESIDE STILL WATERS.

CHAPTER I.

A JOURNAL BEGUN.

MARCH 7, 1874. My eighteenth birthday. A very good day to begin a journal, for by this time I have given up most of the good resolutions that I made in common with all the rest of the world on New Year's day, so my mind is quite unburdened by the consciousness of anything else that must be regularly performed. I think this is about the tenth journal I have begun, and this time I really mean to keep on, for it must be nice to have a record of one's daily life.

To-day begins a new year in my life, and I feel as if I was beginning a new life too. This morning I said farewell to uncle and my dear, dear aunt, who have always taken the place of father and mother to me, for an indefinite time. They are going South, for a number of years it may be, to see if the change will benefit uncle's health.

I feel as if I must stop right here and ex-

plain it all to you, dear journal, so that you can understand all that I record on your pages. You see uncle is an "invalid." Now don't think he is a dear old patient saint who is suffering with an incurable disease that is making rapid strides towards the end. Don't think he is one of those lovely invalids whose presence in the house is a benediction, and whom every one thinks it a privilege to minister to. That is *such* a mistake. His disease is one of those convenient ones that let one do everything he wants to, and which give him a good excuse for shirking everything that is unpleasant.

I feel a little conscience-stricken as I write this. I know just how dear auntie would look at me in a grieved way, and I can almost hear her say, "Ah, Phyllis, when will you learn to have more sympathy with your poor dear uncle?" Well, as no one will ever read these pages, I will say just what I think. If auntie was ten times as ill as uncle, I know she would never have become the selfish, irritable, nervous person that uncle is. It's my belief that he suffers more from ill-temper than from ill-health. Auntie says my healthy nerves cannot understand how delicately poised the nerves of an invalid are, and that uncle cannot help his ebullitions of temper any more than he can help his attacks of illness. That may be, but I never

remember having seen him make the slightest effort to control his irritability, and I think a man who will make his whole household miserable because something has jarred his nerves, is decidedly selfish.

I am afraid I don't approve of my uncle at all, and I know it is a dreadful thing to put down in black and white, but it is true. Poor patient, unselfish auntie has made herself a perfect slave to his whims, and many a time I know it has been hard for her to reconcile some of his erratic doings with the ideas of right and wrong which she had instilled into my mind. She has done her best to teach me to love and respect him, but I must confess that from the time I was a little child I had a most profound contempt for the elasticity of his principles; and though I was always taught to save any little delicacy for "poor dear uncle," yet it seemed to me a most unfair thing that he should eat as a matter of course the dainties that the rest of us would have so greatly enjoyed sharing. Well, I suppose the fact of his being a minister doesn't really make it any worse, for I have noticed that people who profess the most are usually the greatest humbugs; but I am quite determined upon this, that I will never have anything to do with the style of religion which makes a man selfish and tyrannical.

I shall miss auntie, for I do love her with all my heart. I do not know but that I admire her all the more for trying to shield uncle so loyally, but I am glad that my life is finally separated from my uncle's, as I feel that it is, for I am left alone to make my fortune in this great city.

Poor auntie was anxious about leaving me before I had any pupils or any settled income; but I told her I was not at all afraid that I could not take good care of myself, and she must not worry about me.

I feel very sanguine as I sit here to-night, feeling every inch my own mistress. True, I have no family friends to fall back upon if I should not succeed, for uncle never had many friends, and he always said he was too nervous to let auntie have any company and keep up her old friendships; so I am virtually alone in this great city, with only a diploma from a fashionable seminary to assure me a livelihood. I have no fear of failure, though. Somehow I feel that I shall surely succeed, and I have a glad, triumphant feeling that my life is in my own hands now and I can make it what I will.

Let me write a mental photograph of myself and sketch my future as I see it before me to-night. I am eighteen to-day, young looking for my age I regret to say, as that seems to interfere with my probability of getting pupils. I am not

pretty. I just stopped writing and surveyed myself in the glass, trying to describe myself as impartially as a stranger might. My hair and eyes are my only good points, I must candidly admit, for the rest of my features are undeniably plain. My hair is a real golden, and my eyes are dark blue (expressive, people say, though I cannot judge of that), with dark lashes and strongly marked eyebrows. My nose is too large, my mouth and teeth are decidedly ugly, and I persist in calling attention to the latter by laughing at the slightest provocation. Now for my acquirements. I have a good English education, and I think I remember as much of the five years' course of study at the seminary as any of the girls, though I rushed through it in three years. I am considered a good musician. I know I ought to be, after the hours and hours of faithful practice I have spent upon that branch ever since I was six years old. I have n't a particle of talent for music, but I do love it dearly, and long ago determined I would be proficient in it; so I mean to keep on and take lessons and practise till I excel in it. Music is one of my great ambitions. I am qualified to teach Latin, French, and German. I believe I have a real gift for languages. They seem to come to me without any effort, and I mean to be a good linguist if I only find time to study.

Those are all my marketable accomplishments, for I am too wise to believe that my one talent, by which I fondly hope to earn fame and fortune some day, would be of any pecuniary value to me now. I do mean to make a great authoress some day. The girls at school always prophesied that I would make myself famous by my writing, and even Miss Ellis, who never praised any of us if she could help it, admitted that I had the talent if I only cultivated it. I mean to be a great novelist, to write books of absorbing interest and full of deep thoughts, that all the world will read and admire.

What will ten years make of me, I wonder? Shall I be the brilliant, talented, famous woman that I am looking forward to? My highest ambition is to become an intellectual power in the world, to win for myself a high place upon the ladder of fame which so few women scale. I wish I might give all my thoughts up to it at once, but I must first secure enough pupils to insure me a comfortable livelihood, and then I can set apart hours for self-culture.

It does not make me at all homesick to look around my new home, a comfortably large, sunny room, with my piano in one corner, another corner curtained off to hide my modest housekeeping appurtenances, my books, a few pictures, and my writing-desk. I am sure I

shall enjoy my lonely life exceedingly. I am in a large boarding-house, but I shall not probably see much of my neighbors, as dinner is the only meal I will take at the public table. My breakfast I will prepare for myself, and my lunch I will take wherever it is most convenient.

I am quite eager for to-morrow to come, that I may start out on my quest of fortune. Good night, dear journal. I shall not ramble on at such length very often, but I had so much to tell you to-night, so many thoughts and ambitions to share with you, that I forgot your pages were not inexhaustible.

MARCH 8. I did not realize how tired I was after all the excitement of yesterday, until I closed my journal and felt the reaction. It did not take me many moments to convert the piece of furniture, that in the daytime deceitfully simulates a bookcase, into a bed, and I tumbled in to forget all my ambitions, and only remember that I was a tired, sleepy girl who needed a good night's rest. It was really fun this morning to make my coffee over my tiny oil-stove, and while eating my solitary breakfast I laid my plans for the day.

I had an appointment at eleven o'clock which I was hopeful might result in an immediate engagement, and I started in good season. I stood at the corner of the street for a few moments

hesitating whether I should wait for a car or walk down. It was quite a long walk, but I had abundance of time, and so I economically resolved to save my car-fare, as, if my little purse should become exhausted before I had any way of replenishing its contents, I should find it rather a hard matter to subsist upon one meal a day. On my way I passed the church of which I am nominally a member, and which I attended during vacations. The rector was standing in the vestibule, looking anxiously up and down the street, while the bell was ringing its last strokes.

"Oh, I am so glad to see you, Phyllis!" he exclaimed. "I did not know what we should do for music this morning, for the organist has not come nor sent any substitute. You will play for us, will you not?"

I pleaded my engagement, but Dr. Vincent overruled my objections, so I yielded, though I was conscious it was not making a very good beginning of my new life to fail in meeting my first appointment punctually. Short as the Lenten service was, it necessarily delayed me half an hour, and I encountered a frown of disapproval from the lady who looked up from the desk upon which lay a pile of business letters.

"You are late, Miss Graham," she remarked, glancing at the clock.

I explained the reason of my delay, and a lady who was sitting by the window looked up at me with an expression of interest.

"Do you play the organ?" she asked. "Would you like to have a regular engagement as organist? We are just looking for some one to take charge of the music in our mission chapel, and though the salary is small, you might think it worth while to take the position."

Of course I was only too glad to accept. The practice would be of benefit to me, and then some time I might hear of an opportunity to obtain a position as organist in one of the large churches. I will not tell even you, dear journal, what the salary is, for it is so small that I am afraid I would be completely discouraged if I divided it by the number of services for which I have to play. First there is Sunday-school at nine o'clock, church at half-past ten, German Sunday-school at two, a preaching service in German at four, for which my predecessor always played as a matter of kindness. I suppose I shall do the same, especially as it will help me keep up my German; then there is a praise service at seven and a preaching service at half-past seven. Wednesday evening is prayer-meeting, and Friday is singing-school. Rather an onerous position when all its duties are counted up; but I must be willing to begin with small

things, and I suppose it is something to get any kind of a foothold in this busy city where every one is struggling for himself.

Looking back over the events of the day, it seems strange that such a little matter as the decision between walking and riding down town should have been the means of getting me this position; but so it was, for if I had not delayed to play the organ for Dr. Vincent, and then given that as my excuse for tardiness, I might never have heard of this mission chapel. I had not missed my opportunity of pupils either, for a lady who had called at the Association rooms to see me had left her address and a request that I would call.

It was a handsome house, elegantly furnished, with every indication of luxury, and I felt as if I should be very fortunate to obtain pupils here. My references from my teachers were satisfactory and I was able to teach all the branches required, so I began to feel very hopeful. The lady looked at me contemplatively for a few moments.

"You are very young," she said in a disappointed tone. "It is a great risk engaging any one who has had no experience in teaching."

"But I frequently taught the younger pupils during my last year at school," I said.

"That was different though," was the answer.

"There you had the authority of the teachers to sustain you, but here I should expect you to take full charge of the children during the four morning hours, and I cannot be annoyed with complaints about them. If you cannot manage them, you must not attempt the position. We might make a trial and see how you would succeed. You know young teachers are often very glad to teach for nothing for several months, that they may acquire experience. Now you may undertake the education of my children for three months merely on trial, and if we find their progress is satisfactory, I will engage you then for a year."

I could hardly believe that this wealthy woman was really proposing to have me give her my services without any compensation for three months, and when I found that this was her intention, I quite positively declined to accept this kind offer. Anxious as I was for the position, I could not afford to do this, and I told her so. With an evident appreciation of her own generosity that I did not share, she suggested that perhaps under the circumstances, considering my high testimonials, she might waive a trial, and would engage me from the following Monday. She offered me half the salary that I am sure she has always had to pay heretofore, and when I accepted her terms, she added that

she would expect an hour every Saturday morning spent exclusively upon the eldest child's music. I suppose I was weak to yield to this extortion, but small as the sum is, it will pay my room-rent and car-fare.

When I saw the long list of unemployed teachers on the books at the Association rooms this morning, I felt more willing to accept any opening that might be before me.

I do hope that I shall like the children. I felt the least little bit lonely this evening when I came home to my empty room and realized that I had no dear auntie to listen to my story. It was quite a relief to think that I could scribble my confidences between your broad, freckled covers, dear journal; and if you are not particularly encouraging, at all events you do not throw cold water upon my ambitious hopes. I am rather tired, but I mean to have two hours of practice before I seek my bookcase-bed.

CHAPTER II.

NEW DUTIES.

MARCH 12. You have been neglected for three days, dear journal, but there was nothing specially interesting to record. Now as this is Sunday evening, and I have a little leisure, I will enjoy a chat with you. I began my duties as organist to-day. I was sorry to find out that it is a long, bleak walk across the city to the chapel, and one which I cannot avoid unless I am recklessly extravagant and take three cars. I find that it will be necessary to spend the greater part of the day there, for I really had scarcely time to-day between church and afternoon Sunday-school to rush home and eat a hurried lunch.

The Sunday-school is very well attended, and I was quite interested in watching the bright, keen faces of the little street-arabs who composed a class just in front of the piano. The service was altogether new to me. It has happened that I never attended any but the regular liturgical service of the church in which I was brought up, and the service to-day interested and shocked me. There was a short Scriptural

prayer, an invocation, I think they call it, a hymn, the reading of a chapter, and then the long prayer. This it was that shocked me, for after the set, stately phrases of the liturgical prayers, this seemed to me positively irreverent.

The pastor is a young man who has but recently begun his work here, and whom I am not quite sure that I shall like. To-day his father, a gentle, venerable old man, conducted the service. The congregation was composed of the usual tenement-house population, plain, hard-working people, many of them showing in their faces the struggle of constant effort to provide daily bread. When the minister began his prayer I listened in amazed wonder. Instead of addressing God as a mighty Creator and Supreme Ruler, and praying in a general way for the general needs of humanity, he prayed as if God was a very loving Father who was close to the very poorest and youngest. He just seemed to gather up all the needs and trials and temptations of these common people, in all their littleness and commonplaceness, and ask for help and strength for each one. I could imagine that each person would find some special petition in the prayer which represented his own homely need, and of course it must have been a great comfort to them to feel that they were being particularly thought of and recommended to God.

But I do think it was irreverent. I am not just sure what I really believe. I like to think that I am a real heathen, making no pretensions to religion of any kind, but I suppose it is natural that I should have a sort of belief in the God whom my aunt loves, and to whom I am sure she goes for help to bear her trials. I do believe in her religion. I will record it in your pages, dear journal, but she is the only one I have ever met, who made any pretensions to religion, who seemed really consistent. I detest shams, and will not pretend to anything I do not believe in with all my heart and soul. Necessarily I sail under false colors, for people seem to take it for granted that, being a minister's niece, I must be better than ordinary people; and as I am also a member of the church, that seems quite conclusive. I was confirmed five years ago, rather unexpectedly to myself. I came home for my vacation, and was told that confirmation was to be administered in our church, and as I was old enough, Dr. Vincent had added my name to the list. I remember hurrying to the church the following morning and presenting myself at the chancel rail. I had never read over the confirmation vows, and when I heard them I could not help thinking how solemn and binding they would be if they were really meant to be taken literally.

When the trembling hands of the dear old bishop rested upon my head I did wish that somehow I might be better afterward; but these momentary feelings were banished as soon as I went home, for uncle was sick, and auntie was very busy attending to his wants. She seized a moment in which to kiss me tenderly and murmur, "God bless you, darling," and then uncle's voice was heard calling her impatiently, and she hurried away. I would have liked a little chance for a talk with her; I wanted to tell her how much I wished to be better now that I had been confirmed; but it always seemed to fret uncle to have her sit down and talk to any one, so the opportunity never came, and after that vacation I never sought for it.

I had fancied that the girls who were members of the church were not at all better or more honorable than the others, so I made up my mind they never really meant what they said when they took upon them their confirmation vows. Religion was merely a matter for Sunday use, to be taken to church as one takes a prayer-book or hymnal. I have been confirmed in that belief by the people I have met ever since, and I can't imagine that I shall ever have any reason to change it.

To-day, to be sure, that minister prayed as if he felt very near God, but I suppose it was just

his manner. What a sweet, comforting thing it would be though, if one could honestly believe that God really loved her and cared about all the little troublesome things that worry one so. I fancy I was the only church-goer in all this houseful to-day, and this evening I hear music and singing in the parlor. I declined an invitation to join them, because I was very tired and wanted a quiet rest, but I hope Mrs. Nelson will not think I declined on the score of superior goodness. I don't want to give any one such an impression for a moment, for I wouldn't pretend to religion for anything. Good-night, my *fidus Achates*; I must rest for my new duties to-morrow.

MARCH 13. I am thoroughly tired to-night, and just a little bit discouraged about my new pupils. I am very fond of good lovable children, and even of mischievous ones, but I never saw any little ones quite like these four Barnard children. While I was waiting in the parlor this morning the nurse looked in with a flushed, indignant face.

"And you're the new governess, I suppose," she said, not unkindly. "Well, I'm sorry for you from the bottom of my heart, for it's no slip of a girl that those children need, but a man that's able to make them stand around. I've just been giving warning to the mistress, for I

could n't stand their tricks any longer. They filled my trunk with water last night, and it 's ruined entirely my things are ; but all the mistress did was to laugh when I told her. I 'll stand no such treatment if I do have to work for my living."

I was growing uneasy lest Mrs. Barnard might hear these confidences, and blame me for listening to them, but at the sound of shrill childish voices in the hall above the nurse retreated. No wonder my heart sank at the thought of the lawless pupils I must manage unaided by parental authority. I mustered up my courage as the children entered the parlor, and determined that they should not suspect that I was afraid of them. First came an unattractive girl of twelve, who was introduced to me as Florence, then two brothers, Walter and Percy, whose ages might have been eight and ten years, and a little girl of some six years who was still called Baby. They responded to my greeting with a prolonged stare, and not even Baby could be induced to speak.

"Now you may show Miss Graham the schoolroom and tell her what you have been studying," Mrs. Barnard said, after giving me some brief directions. "Be good children, and don't quarrel or plague Baby."

As we left the room, Walter obeyed his mo-

ther's last injunction by snapping his fingers in the little girl's face, and she broke out in a fretful wail. Mrs. Barnard came to the foot of the stairs and called after us in an annoyed tone,

"Baby, what is the matter? Miss Graham, can you not prevent the child from being teased the very first thing?"

The color rushed to my cheeks, for the tone in which these words were uttered made them seem a reproof to me, and I felt as if I already repented of my bargain. The schoolroom was large and pleasant, and I was glad it was at the top of the house, where Mrs. Barnard could not hear all the children's altercations. The school-books were lying in a large drawer in a chaotic heap, with torn, ink-stained leaves, missing covers, and a general air of abuse. It was no easy task to find out what the children had studied, for they all professed complete ignorance of the place where they had stopped when their last teacher left them, and upon questioning them a little I found that a review from the beginning of the text-books would be the most desirable plan to pursue. I thought the four long hours would never pass. I tried to be firm and dignified and assert my authority, but it was evident that the children had no idea of respect even for their parents, and they did not

hesitate to decline obeying whenever they felt so disposed. Walter and Percy seemed to find their chief occupation in teasing Baby, who is a most peevish child, and will wail on the slightest provocation, and when I tried to appeal to the gallantry which I had believed was an instinct in every boy, Walter stared at me and queried insolently, "What are you giving us anyhow?"

By the time the clock struck one I was tempted to follow the nurse's example and give warning, but I made up my mind that I would not be so easily conquered by discouragement, and I would wait at least until I had a prospect of more pupils before I gave these up. I was thoroughly tired at the end of my morning's work, for besides the really hard work of trying to teach these restless little mortals anything, I had been nervous all the time lest Mrs. Barnard should come up and reprove me again for the lack of order.

"Did you behave this way with your last teacher?" I asked reprovingly; and with a loud laugh Percy answered, "I should say so. We did as we pleased with the old thing, and we inked her face if she said anything."

Perhaps after all the confusion was not greater than it had been under previous rule. I tried to practise when I got home, but I was too

tired and had to rest till the hour came for little Kitty Nelson's daily music lesson. She is a bright, teachable child, and I really enjoyed her lesson after my turbulent morning. I meant to study this evening, but I am afraid I shall not be able to do much till my morning pupils are less tiresome. I will go to bed and forget all these things that are trying me so, and dream of the future and all it holds for me. Good-night, dear journal.

MARCH 22. More than a week has passed since I have had time or inclination to write anything. I am not discouraged at all, only I find life is not quite the triumphant progress that I had thought it to be. To live (and by that I mean supplying one's self simply with the necessities of life) requires hard work, and it is not the easiest thing in the world to obtain pupils when one is without influence. It is uphill work, but I will not be dismayed. I write bright, cheerful letters to dear auntie. Whatever happens, I am determined never to burden her with my worries. I will bear them alone. I do not mind the work, though my morning hours are as long and exhausting as they were at first, but I do regret that my plans for self-culture have to be more or less laid aside. I am too tired to study much after I have been teaching most of the day, and so my little leisure slips

away unimproved. I do manage to get a little systematic practice, and I am taking a daily lesson in Spanish from a gentleman who teaches in the house and is very anxious to acquire a better knowledge of English, but there are so many plans I have to lay aside.

Oh, I do so long to make the very most of myself, and it chafes and frets me to have to give up so much time to earning enough for just my daily needs. I do long to see auntie so often and have real good talks with her, but on the whole I am not at all homesick. Nothing is as hard for me to bear as perpetual fault-finding and ill-humor, and all dear aunt's sweetness of disposition could not make up for uncle's nervousness. I do mean to be always bright and cheerful, so that people will like to have me about instead of looking on me as a cross.

I was so pleased to-day when Mrs. Nelson called me "a ray of sunshine." She said I did not know how often I brightened her up by coming in to say a cheery, pleasant word. I am so glad, for I have often pitied her for having to go on day after day in such a treadmill routine, without any great ambitions to whose fulfilment she can look forward when she is discouraged with the present. It is very pleasant to be liked. I believe that is one of my ambitions too.

CHAPTER III.

SCHOOL TRIALS.

APRIL 14. You were all dusty to-night, dear old journal, when I took you down from the shelf. I have not written because my days have been decidedly monotonous. Every morning I spend four unhappy hours with the Barnard children. I was congratulating myself that I had really begun to interest them in their studies, and I actually believed that I had some control over the little imps. I was completely undeceived to-day, however. Just as I entered the house this morning I saw Mrs. Barnard in her street costume bidding good-by to the children, and I heard her say that she would not come home till after lunch.

As soon as I reached the schoolroom the boys petitioned for a holiday, saying that their mother would never know the difference, and that I might as well go, for they did not intend to touch their books. Of course I would not agree to this proposal, though I would have been as delighted as the boys themselves to have escaped. They apparently yielded their point when I persistently refused the demanded

holiday, and as they sat down at the table I walked into the large, dark closet which opens into the room to hang up my hat. As I turned my back to the children for a moment, the boys bounded from their places with a shriek of triumph, and slamming the door, locked me in.

I was furiously angry, but realizing that I was completely at their mercy I controlled my temper, and as soon as I could make my voice heard through the shouts of laughter in which Florence and Baby heartily joined, I calmly demanded that they should open the door. They greeted this demand with the most hilarious demonstrations of delight.

“Will you promise to go right home and not bother us with any more lessons to-day if we do let you out?” asked Percy. I would not yield, even to procure my freedom, and Percy shouted,

“All right, Miss Contrary. You can stay there till mamma comes home now, and see what she ’ll say to you for letting yourself be locked up. You ’ll catch it. Now I ’ll give you one more chance, and then we ’ll go down stairs and lock the schoolroom door, so Ann can’t let you out. Will you give us a holiday?”

“No,” I said firmly, wondering whether the children would really dare to do as Percy had threatened. I need not have doubted that they were fully equal to any piece of mischief.

There was a hurried exit from the room, a banging of the door and turning of the key in the lock, and I heard the noisy footsteps going down stairs and realized that I was indeed a prisoner. I was so angry that I burst into a passion of tears as I recognized my helplessness, but crying only made my head ache, so I desisted after a time and determined to bear my lengthy imprisonment as philosophically as I could.

It was a long one indeed. Wearily as the hands of the clock dragged their way around the dial when I was teaching, the hours seemed interminable now. The lunch-bell rang at last, and I was both faint and hungry, but my tyrants did not come up stairs to release me till they had finished their meal. I stalked out in silent indignation when at last the key was turned, but I felt as if I did not look very dignified in spite of my efforts, for my hair was ruffled, my face flushed, and the children's observing eyes doubtless detected traces of tears upon my cheeks. I spoke no word, but put on my hat and took my departure in stern silence. I think it awed the children more than any outbreak of anger could have done, for they stood and regarded me curiously in a subdued way, doubtless wondering what I meant to do. I have only just cooled off enough to think the matter over calmly.

My first impulse was to send Mrs. Barnard a

note, telling her that nothing would induce me to teach her children another hour, for they were wholly unmanageable and the worst children in the world. It relieved my mind to plan this letter, but now that my indignation has subsided a little I see that I cannot afford to do it. It is too late in the year to hope to get other pupils for the morning hours, and I cannot afford to have so much idle time upon my hands, glad as I should be to have it for study. I should only injure myself, for Mrs. Barnard could readily fill my place. Moreover, if I left her in a fit of anger she would of course withhold from me any satisfactory reference as to my capabilities as a teacher. Bitter as the pill was, I must swallow it without a grimace, and if I complained of the children's treatment I should most truly, as Percy said, "catch it" for not having them under better control.

My afternoons are pretty well filled up now, for I have several music scholars, and only my evenings are free, that is, such of them as I do not spend at the mission chapel. I can accomplish so little even when I do sit down to spend an evening in study, that I think I might as well enjoy myself when I have an opportunity.

I have been to the opera three times lately with a young doctor who boards in the house, and I enjoyed myself so much. I sometimes

wonder whether every one enjoys things as intensely as I do. I just enjoy things with every fibre of my body, and anything I am at all interested in I throw myself into with all my heart and soul. I don't believe I should enjoy being one of those calm, equable people who never go to extremes, even if I could change my nature.

Such a funny question as Mr. Vernon, the young minister at the chapel, asked me this evening. He walked home with me after prayer-meeting, and I had been rattling off a perfect string of nonsense, when one of those little silences that come once in a while fell between us, and we walked a few steps without speaking. I had noticed that he had been a little preoccupied all the way, and now he looked so thoughtful that I rallied him laughingly.

"What are you thinking about, Mr. Vernon?" I asked. "Surely nothing that I have been saying has called up that thoughtful look."

"May I tell you what I have been thinking of?" he said in response; and when I assented he went on:

"I have been wondering whether you were a Christian, Miss Graham."

I was so astonished that I positively stood still for a moment. I was half angry too, strangely inconsistent as it may seem. I don't want to be thought religious, and disclaim even

to myself any pretensions to goodness, and yet it annoyed me to have any one question whether or not I was a Christian.

"You rather took my breath away, your question was so startling," I said, recovering my breath and my good temper at the same moment. "I suppose I can say 'yes,' for I have been a member of the church ever since I was a child; but to be perfectly candid with you, I will add that I wish I was not."

"Why, Miss Graham!"

I laughed merrily at the shocked surprise in Mr. Vernon's face.

"It was my turn to surprise you then, was it not?" I asked. "I will be quite frank with you, Mr. Vernon, if you will believe that I speak quite impersonally. I do not wish to be a church member because I have seen so few whom I believed to be sincere except my aunt. I have been thrown in close contact with members of the church, and it never seemed to make their lives any different, and their religion was often used merely as a cloak to secure selfish ends. I suppose I do believe in a God. I am not quite sure whether I believe in the Bible or not. My aunt believes in it and I believe in her. I think that expresses the amount of my religious belief quite clearly. Now I don't want to talk about the matter, for

all the arguments you could bring up would not have the effect upon me that living arguments have had, and I must refuse to discuss a matter that no amount of discussion could alter. You see I am taking it for granted that you are about to do your professional duty towards me as a member of your congregation and not merely a salaried officer."

We had reached home by this time, and I invited Mr. Vernon to come in, but he declined.

"No, since you so positively refuse to let me talk to you upon the one subject which is in my thoughts to-night. At least you will not refuse me permission to pray that you may see the beauty of the one perfect Example instead of being repelled by the imperfect copies, which I grant you are but poor and feeble imitations."

"Do n't waste the best passage of next Sunday's sermon upon such an unappreciative listener," I laughed, but I repented of my ill-timed jest as he turned away with a disappointed, hurt look in his face.

I can't bear to wound people's feelings and I will tell him I am sorry the next time I see him, but there was not any use in pretending to take anything of the kind seriously.

I wonder what people ever become ministers for. I should think so many other professions might be far more enjoyable and give an ambi-

tious man opportunities of distinguishing himself that a minister could scarcely have. I suppose if I asked Mr. Vernon what influenced him to make this choice, he would probably answer me in a proper professional way that would not tell me any more than I knew before.

I have no doubt I would have shocked him still more if I had told that I should never think of going to church if I did not have to play the organ. I make the services as improving as I can. I follow the chapters in my French Testament and try to translate the sermon into that language, but I suppose that would not accord with Mr. Vernon's ideas of improving the services if he knew it.

The clock is striking eleven. I must put you back on your shelf, old journal; good-night.

CHAPTER IV.

BEGINNING AUTHORSHIP.

MAY 17. I think I know why I have always given up my journals after the first two or three weeks. It was because just as soon as I stopped writing in them regularly every day I thought it was of no use to keep on. This time, even if three or four months go by without my writing a word on these pages, I will not give up, but will just scribble whenever I feel like it or have something worth writing.

Nothing much has happened during the last month. I have had more to do, for my class of pupils has been increasing in a very encouraging way, and I can look forward to relinquishing Mrs. Barnard's children, when the summer vacation begins, with the assurance that even if I should fail to fill those hours I could get along comfortably. I am glad, for one hour there tires me more than all the rest of my lessons put together. I use all my odds and ends of time for study, but I have been giving up my evenings to enjoyment lately. I am really becoming quite gay. Almost every evening I have some pleasure engagement, and it is very flattering to

be sought after as an acquisition to any gathering. I suppose it is because I can play and dance and rattle off ridiculous nothings, that people like to be with me.

I do believe I am growing conceited, dear journal. I don't mind confessing it to you, for I know you won't scold me for it. I don't wonder at it, for so many flattering speeches are made and so many complimentary remarks repeated to me, that it is enough to turn a wiser head than my foolish one. This is a very delightful, appreciative world to live in, and I am very happy. I am not really satisfied, for that I shall never be until I reach the height of my ambition and become famous; but for the present I might as well enjoy the good times that come to me; and how I do enjoy each one of them! I rarely have a lonely or unhappy moment.

Just once in a while I wish, shall I tell you what, dear journal? When I see a real home, where the children seem to lead such a happy, sheltered life, where the father and mother are both tender and thoughtful of their happiness, I think I would give anything in the world to be a member of such a family circle. In some ways it is very pleasant to lead an independent life, guided by one's own judgment—or impulses, as I sometimes think it is in my case—and untrammeled by any restrictions; but I think I would

gladly give up my independence to be guided by some one who really loved me and cared for my best good.

Well, one can't have everything, and after all there are doubtless any number of heartaches and bickerings that I know nothing about in these pleasant homes. Probably nobody ever knew how unhappy our home used to be, or what a self-sacrificing life aunt's has always been. Uncle's nerves have been a Moloch before which everything has been sacrificed relentlessly. I am so glad that auntie can find so much comfort in her Bible and prayers, because she has nothing else to help her bear all her trials. There is no doubt that everything is real to her, and if anything could make me believe in the reality of religion, it would be her consistent life; but she is only one out of the hundreds who but pretend to goodness.

To-night was prayer-meeting night again. What dreary things those meetings are, and it is not Mr. Vernon's fault either, for he really tries to make them interesting; but he has no one to help him, for only two or three men ever put in an appearance, and not a word will they say. The singing is the dreariest farce of all, for though the dozen or so of elderly women that always come do make an effort to sing, the effect is anything but pleasant, as they haven't

strong voices at the best. I do wish I could sing. Unfortunately I have n't any voice at all, so I can't improve matters. Mr. Vernon will give out a triumphant, jubilant hymn, but after we have sung it a discouraged tone creeps into his voice, and the rest of the service is n't particularly cheerful, to say the least. I really am sorry for him sometimes, and I never make fun of his earnest efforts to create a blaze out of such damp material.

He almost always walks home with me after church, but I will never let him talk to me in a professional strain. He need n't feel the least responsibility about me, and I should think his mind must need a reaction after continually preaching to those poor people at the chapel. What is the use of it all anyway? I privately think, though I don't tell Mr. Vernon this of course, that they would be much better off at home resting themselves after their hard week's work, than sitting in the dreary little chapel, listening to words that surely don't convey much meaning to their minds. I suppose it is part of his professional duty to be interested in all those stupid people, and of course it would take all the heart out of his work if he believed it were useless, but it seems to me a great waste of energy.

JULY 1. I cannot believe that so much time

has really passed since I opened your pages last, old journal, but I really have not had time to sit down and write before, and to-night I am almost too tired, but I shall have time to rest now for a little while. To-day my summer vacation of two months begins, and until the first of September I am free, excepting Kitty Nelson's daily lesson. I have been overdoing lately, and the hot weather has made me feel more languid and weak than I have ever been before. After a day of constant teaching, I suppose I should have taken the evenings for rest, but I could not bring myself to refuse all the pleasant times that were waiting for me, and so I have been using up my strength in a reckless way. Like the prudent little ant, I have saved up enough for my days of enforced idleness, so I can spend these two months as I will. I will rest with all my might for two or three days, and then what do you think I am going to do, dear journal? I am going to write the novel which will be my first stepping-stone to fame. I just thrill all over at the thought that I shall some day hold in my hand a book of my own creation, my own brain child! I am very eager to begin my work, but if I would do myself justice I must wait till this extreme weariness is over. Mr. and Mrs. Barnard are going to Europe, and they have decided to place the children in a boarding-school while

they are absent. I think that Mrs. Barnard thought this intelligence would distress me greatly, but I could hardly keep from an open expression of delight. She complimented me very highly, and said the children had never been under such good control, nor advanced so rapidly, with any of their previous teachers. I am glad that she feels as if they had progressed, for the time I have spent with them has been anything but satisfactory to me. I think a boarding-school would be the best place for them, for they would be made to obey there, and they could learn easily enough, if they were under any kind of discipline.

I am glad that I have bade them farewell, at all events, and I feel like congratulating myself on my perseverance, for the children said that no other teacher had ever stayed over two months. I think I have grown quite aged in my trying experiences, and I am not afraid that my youth will be any objection next fall.

I am so full of enthusiasm over my novel. Oh, dear journal, what can be lovelier than to be young and strong, full of ambition and energy and the triumphant feeling that success awaits one in the future? I feel so hopeful and self-reliant, so sure that I shall succeed in my plans. I cannot even imagine settling down to a commonplace life, with nothing but the monotonous

round of drudgery that constitutes the lives of so many women. Perhaps I shall not write in you again till my novel is finished. I shall have no thoughts nor time for anything else when I once begin. Till then, if it shall be so, good-by.

AUGUST 29. Finished at last! I look at that great pile of neatly-copied manuscript on my desk, and have an eerie feeling that it is the work of some enchantment rather than the result of my own patient labor. I have spent the happiest weeks of my life over this work. I have scarcely taken time to eat or sleep, I have worked so feverishly over it; and many a time my brain has been so full of eager thoughts that I have risen from my bed and worked for two or three hours, and then gone back to sleep till morning. It has all seemed reality to me, and I feel quite worn out with all the varying emotions which have been my own while I was portraying them. How I love to write! I wish I need do nothing else, but unless this novel should be immediately successful, in a financial as well as a literary way, I must give the best of my time to teaching for some years to come. If I could lift up but a corner of the veil which hides the future from me, and see what reception awaits my brain child! I have worked rapidly, I know, to have completed and copied so

large a work in eight short weeks, but most of the real brain work has been done slowly during the past few months, and I had nothing to do but commit my thoughts to paper now.

Now I must rest till Monday, and let my mind and nerves react from the strain I have been putting upon them, or I shall not be fit to begin work. Mrs. Nelson tells me that I look quite worn out. I have been feeling the enervating effects of the hot weather we have been having, but I shall soon be rested and refreshed now. I shall not have much to do before the third week in September, so I will be quite myself by that time. Good-night, dear journal, I wish you were human and could be a little sympathetic to-night when I am so happy. Nobody knows what I have been doing, so I cannot expect any sympathy, but I am so glad, so glad, that I want some one to be glad with me.

SEPTEMBER 15. I surely ought not to have neglected writing so long when I have had such good fortune to record. I am so glad now that I persevered with those dreadful children and never told their mother my candid opinion about them. It seems that Mrs. Barnard spoke so highly of me to her friends that I am indebted to her for three new families, which occupy the greater part of my day and pay royally, that is, in comparison to Mrs. Barnard's

meagre salary. Now my time is well and profitably filled and the children are all very lovable and intelligent. I am so fortunate to have my hours engaged. There are two teachers boarding here in the house, some ten years older than I am, with long experience in teaching, who find it very difficult to get pupils, and here they have just come to me, almost without seeking, inexperienced girl that I am.

My beloved novel is at the publishers' awaiting their verdict. I am trying to wait very patiently, but it is hard work. Sometimes I am in a fever of impatience and can scarcely restrain myself from going and inquiring childishly, "How soon can I know?"

Suppose it should be rejected! Should I ever have the courage to write a line again? Yes, yes. I do not believe a hundred rebuffs could really discourage me utterly, but my heart is so bound up in this book that I cannot believe it will be a failure. It is different from most of the novels I have read, and so I cannot judge of it by comparison with others, but I am sure it must be worthy of seeing the light. I must school myself to patience and wait.

OCTOBER 1. I have indeed had to "let patience have her perfect work." A whole month I have waited for the letter from the publishers, and when I came home every evening my heart

beat faster as I looked over my letters to see if perhaps the fateful letter was among them.

To-night it came, and quivering with eagerness I left the dinner table and went up stairs, that I might be alone to read the contents. I was so intensely excited that I could hardly open the envelope with my trembling fingers, and the first time I read over the letter I could not understand it. I began it once more.

It was a kind letter, though the publisher spoke very frankly about the faults of the novel. It was somewhat crude, though not as much so as might have been expected from the youth and inexperience of the writer. Here and there he marked a fault of construction, but on the whole it showed marked originality and considerable cleverness in executing a plot which, although hackneyed in itself, was treated in such a manner that it seemed new. He felt justified in offering to publish it.

I wonder if I shall ever be quite as happy again in all my life as I was when I fairly took in the tenor of the letter. I fancy it was one of those supreme moments which come only once in one's lifetime. I am glad I stopped to enjoy that thoroughly before I read the rest of the letter, for that quieted my raptures.

In my ignorance I had never thought that an author had anything to do, after a book

was accepted, but await liberal checks sent from time to time by the publishers; but on reading the rest of the letter I saw that an estimate was made of the cost, and the part that I must bear was a small fortune to me. It would mean at least eight months of the closest economy and miserly hoarding to save up that sum, but I did not shrink from the self-denial it involved. All I thought of was the necessary delay before the work could be begun.

It is not so hard, though, now to wait, when I am sure of acceptance. If I had had to wait eight months in uncertainty I do not think I could have borne it. I shall become a miser now in good earnest. I will fill my evening hours with pupils if I can, that I may accumulate money faster.

What do I care for rest, pleasure, anything compared with ambition? Will it not be ample repayment for all exertion and privation when I hold in my own hands my own book, no longer a mere fancy flitting through my brain, but a real thing that may open up a glorious vista of possibilities to me?

Good night, dear journal. My dreams will be happy ones, for I shall sleep with this letter under my pillow.

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR.

DECEMBER 13. I have n't had a single interesting thing to tell you, old friend, and two or three times I have been decidedly blue and discouraged—an unusual experience for me—and then I would not write. Sometimes it seems as if everything in the way of outward circumstances was against me, and even living was a hand-to-hand fight with the world.

So many girls of my age have such a care-free, irresponsible time, with every wish gratified and nothing to do but enjoy themselves; and if they choose to study or improve themselves, they can have time and opportunity to do anything they like. I can't even imagine what it would seem like to have any one to go to and ask for what I needed, knowing that he would willingly and lovingly provide for me. Still I am no worse off than thousands of others in this great city, and I am better off than many, because I can take care of myself comfortably, and there are some who fail in doing even that.

My little hoard is accumulating rapidly and I am as economical as possible, so that this tedious time of waiting may be shortened. My

breakfast and lunch are frugal as an anchorite's, and when I have time I walk any distance, no matter what the weather, that I may save the car-fare. I shall have to be a little extravagant at Christmas, for I want to send auntie and the children some pretty, useful presents. I know of so many things they need; but I will work harder afterward to make up for the outlay. Except the evenings I am engaged at the chapel, I teach till nearly ten o'clock. I have pupils who are engaged through the day, and are very glad to come here in the evenings and take their lessons.

My days are very full now. Four mornings in the week I exchange English for Spanish and Italian lessons, and by carrying a grammar around in my muff, I manage to get a good deal of study in odds and ends of time. I do love to study, and I am glad I can manage to improve myself a little while I am so busy. I have almost half the money saved up now for the publication of my novel, and it encourages me to keep on saving. Everybody grumbles about my evenings being so occupied, and to confess the truth, I should like now and then to have a little pleasure; but when I look forward to the happiness in store for me at the end of these months of hard work and scrimping, I am content to give up little enjoyments now.

I am becoming a little restless and dissatisfied as Christmas approaches. It is a time when one needs to be a member of a home circle to fully enter into the spirit of the holiday; and this is a lonely life of mine; it touches other lives at every turn, but it does not enter into nor become a part of any. Ah, well, I have my ambitions and they are to me what love and real companionship are to others.

DECEMBER 24. Christmas eve, and I am half infected by little Kittie Nelson's enthusiasm about the delightful, mysterious packages that have been arriving all day. We all asked Mrs. Nelson to keep any parcels that came to-day until to-morrow, when we would open them at the same time, and thus miss the loneliness of an individual Christmas in the solitude of our own rooms. It was prayer-meeting evening, and as usual Mr. Vernon came home with me. When we reached the doorstep, he said,

"I have a Christmas gift for you. May I come in and offer it to you, though it is one you may not care to accept?"

I laughingly assured him that there was no danger of any Christmas gift coming amiss, and ushered him into the little reception-room, which I knew would be deserted for the more cheerful parlors above at that hour in the evening.

I threw aside my heavy cloak and turned up

the dim light till the room was bright. As I turned towards Mr. Vernon with a laughing remark, something in his face startled me, and by a sudden intuition I knew what was coming. How could I prevent it, I thought in a frightened way, but I had no opportunity. Before I could speak, he said, looking down in my face with an expression that made my eyes drop,

“Can you not guess what it is I would offer you for a Christmas present? Can you not accept it?”

“Oh, I am so sorry,” I cried impetuously, with swift tears rushing to my eyes. “I am *so* sorry, but indeed I never thought of such a thing. I did not mean to act in any way to make you think of this. Won’t you forgive me if I did, for indeed I am so sorry?”

“I have nothing to forgive,” he answered very gently. “You need not blame yourself, for I knew you were not intending to make yourself so lovable and attractive that I could not keep myself from this. I had hardly dared let myself hope that you could care for any one who was so different from you in every way, and yet I could not keep from asking you at least. Are you sure you cannot think differently after a time? Perhaps I have startled you by speaking so suddenly. I forgot that you knew nothing of what I have been thinking about for

weeks. If love could make you happy, you need not be afraid to trust your life to me."

"Will you think I am perfectly heartless if I tell you that there is only one thing in this world that can make me happy?" I answered. "I want to be a great writer some day, and that is all I plan for or care about. There is not room in my heart for any other feeling, and ambition is the ruling passion in my life. I cannot imagine letting anything else take its place. Nothing else could satisfy me. I am so sorry. Indeed I would not say anything to hurt you if I could help it, but I know I could never feel as you want to have me, and it is better to tell you so than have you think differently."

"You have not learned to know yourself yet," Mr. Vernon answered, and I fancied there was almost a pitying smile in his eyes as he looked wistfully at me. "Your loving, impulsive nature could never be satisfied with an ambition which, if gratified, would only satisfy your intellect. You have too much heart for that, though you do not admit it. But—just for this once let me speak—the fullest and tenderest human love will never entirely satisfy you. Not until your life is 'hid with Christ in God' will your restless yearnings be wholly gratified. I know you do not feel your need now, but I pray

that God's richest gift, his boundless love, may come to your heart as a Christmas blessing."

My tears were still falling, and I could not trust my voice to speak.

"Don't let me go away thinking that I have pained you," he went on gently. "I see it is not for me to enter into your life, and I know how foolish it was in me to hope it, but I don't want your heart to be sore over my disappointment. Forget all that I have said and let us just meet as friends. We shall be thrown together in our work at the chapel, and don't let me think that what I have said to-night will make you uncomfortable. I shall never allude to it or remind you of it in any way. Good-by!"

I closed the door after him, and came quietly up the back way, that I might not pass the parlor, to my room. I threw myself down and had a good cry, why, I could not tell. I honestly don't feel a bit elated over the fact that I have had a proposal, that a good man has cared enough for me to ask me to share his life. I am only so sorry that I did not know what he was thinking of, that I might have spared him the pain of the refusal. I cannot imagine how girls can wilfully lead a man on when they care nothing for him, and then boast of their success. There was something in his words that moved me strangely. Is it true that ambition without

love cannot gratify me? Is it true that I shall never be satisfied without a real loving, living belief in the God who seems so far away from me now? My life is nothing to him. I have to live it alone and unhelped, then why should I acknowledge his care? How can I believe in what is so unreal to me? I will not worry myself over these questions. I will bathe my face and eyes and put all troublesome thoughts away and go down to the parlor, where I shall forget everything but the present.

DECEMBER 25. I have had a pleasanter Christmas than I anticipated, after all. Mrs. Nelson would not hear of my eating breakfast in my room, but insisted that I should come down to her table. That made the day rather an exception to the ordinary run of common days, to begin with. After breakfast we adjourned to the parlor and opened the parcels that had come for us, those who preferred to do so carrying theirs away to their rooms. I had only expected two or three trifling remembrances from my pupils, so I was as delighted as a child over the great pile of mysterious bundles. It did seem as if every one I knew had remembered me most generously, and I am not old enough yet to have outgrown enjoying a gift most childishly. I wrote a long happy letter to auntie, enjoyed the bountiful Christmas

dinner, and then the day's pleasures were complete with an evening at the opera. I am so glad that I could send dear auntie some Christmas gifts, so that her day too might be a happy one. I did not tell auntie about the novel, though I was sorely tempted to when I wrote to-day. I will keep it for a surprise, and she shall know nothing about it till she opens the book and sees my name on the title page.

JANUARY 1. I did not think that I should not make another entry in my journal last year, but so it happened. I wonder what I shall have occasion to write of joy or sorrow in these pages before another year passes away. One can't help being thoughtful on the threshold of a new year, for it may bring so much with it.

Last night we had determined to dance the old year out and the new one in. It was almost twelve o'clock when we heard a church bell ringing, and some one suggested it was a watch-meeting that was being held in a little church on the next street. I don't remember whose proposition it was that we should all go around to the church, but we agreed to it just for the novelty of the thing, and a few moments later we were all out in the clear white starlight on our way to the church.

We were full of fun and nonsense, but we sobered down when we entered the church, for

an air of solemnity pervaded the place. The minister, an earnest man whose words were impressive even though they might not be called eloquent, was concluding his remarks as we entered, and then a hymn followed. The hands on the large clock pointed to five minutes of twelve as the last verse was sung, and the minister said, "In a few minutes this year will be gone, with its record of sins and mistakes, and the fair white page of a new year will be open before us. Let us spend these fleeting moments in prayer that the blood of the Lamb of God will cleanse the blots of the past, and that we may have new consecration with which to begin the coming year."

There was a profound silence as all present bowed their heads in prayer, and I could almost *feel* the earnestness of some of the worshippers. I am ashamed of my susceptibility and impulsiveness, but for a moment I actually almost believed in these things, and my heart cried out for something higher and purer than anything it had yet known. I had to call my common sense to the rescue. It all sounded beautiful, and the place and the hour made each word impressive, but how long would these things last? Only till the words had died away into silence, and the church was left behind, and then people would go back to their commonplace lives, full

of selfish striving and bickerings and jealousies, and all these solemn things would be laid aside again till Sunday.

Try as hard as I might I could not leave these strange yearnings behind me when I left the church, nor could I regain the overflowing spirits with which I had begun the evening. I could not go back to the parlor to dance the new year well on its way, nor could I join again in the merry banter. I came up to my room instead, and knelt down beside the window where I could look up at the white stars and think.

Are these things real? I wanted to believe that they were, my desire amounted to an intense longing, for I fancied that it would be so restful to believe that God's love brooded over us as tenderly as a mother's love and care; but how could it be anything but a hollow mockery when it never affected the lives of those who pretended to believe in it?

This soberness, I thought, was only a reaction from the high spirits which had run riot all day, and made me the gayest of the gay; so giving myself a good shaking mentally, I went to bed and to sleep.

This morning ushered in a perfect New Year's day, clear and crisp, the streets in perfect condition for sleighing, and a bright sun which was not warm enough to melt the snow. The

sleighs flew backward and forward all day, and the jingling of the bells made merry music. I half wished that I had accepted a friend's invitation to receive calls with her, but after all I enjoyed the novelty of a quiet day at home, and had time for some good practice, which I always enjoy. This year will surely be the happiest of my life, since it will see the publication of my book. I wish I could anticipate a few months.

CHAPTER VI.

WELCOME SURPRISES.

MARCH 1. I wish you had eyes, dear journal, that you could see the pile of money over which I am gloating with all the tenderness of a miser. At last my task is completed, and to-morrow I can take the money to the publishers' and know that my book will be begun. Only a little while now to be patient!

MARCH 2. Work will be begun at once, the publisher says. I wonder what "at once" means.

MARCH 7. My birthday again, and how do you suppose I celebrated it? By reading the proofs of the first few pages of my novel. I think my happiness when I received them can only be excelled by the delight I shall feel when I hold the completed volume in my hands. It was such a delightful surprise to find the proofs awaiting me to-night, for I had anticipated at least two or three weeks' delay. What a happy beginning to this new year of my life!

MARCH 28. Don't expect any more entries until I record that my novel is out. I am too busy and happy over the proofs to have a thought for anything else.

MAY 4. My novel is out at last. I am sure

that the moment I took it in my hands was a time of such intense happiness as I can hardly expect to feel again. I did feel so self-conscious as I came home! I knew just how ridiculous it was, but it seemed as if every one who looked at me must know that I was an author, and that the package in my hand contained my first book. I did not wait to show it to any one, but came right up to my room, where I just sat and *thrilled* for an hour. How can people be happy who have not written books, or who do not look forward to it some day? I do not envy any one in the world to-night. I would not exchange places even with those who are already famous in the literary world, for I think it is more delightful to have untried possibilities in the future than to have reached the place where one realizes her limitations, even if they are broad. I do so love to feel that my life is in my own hands, and I can make of it what I will.

MAY 20. Dr. Vincent came to me this morning and told me that the organist had suddenly left, and that it was necessary to find another person to take his place by the next Sunday. Could I take the organ? I was only too delighted to accept the offer very eagerly. I have never undertaken to use the pedals of a large church organ, and the music is very elaborate, but this is Tuesday, and I have several days to

practise before the Saturday night choir rehearsal. I must arrange to take lessons at once. If I can only get through the first few Sundays satisfactorily, I am sure I can practise enough to feel at my ease and not dread failure.

JUNE 2. I felt like singing to myself, "Lo, the conquering hero comes," as I came home to-night tired but triumphant. I had spent every available moment this week in practice, and at last felt as if I had mastered the intricacies of the stops and pedals. I managed to get through choir practice without blundering very perceptibly, but I must admit I was nervous this morning when I put my foot on the first pedal and the organ sounded its preliminary rumble. However, I was not too frightened to know what I was doing, and so I had the pleasure to-night of being engaged as organist permanently. I am glad, for in the first place the salary is five times as great, the duties are not so arduous, and then the music is more interesting than just those simple hymn tunes which were of so little help to me in the way of practice.

The young girl whom I sent to-day to the chapel as my substitute will be very glad to have the position, and as she lives in the neighbourhood it will not be so hard for her as it was for me to attend all the services. I feel quite elated over my success. In fact I am tasting the sweets

of success in every way just now. I hear so many kind things said about my novel that it is hard to pretend to be modest when I am really intensely proud of it and thrill all over with delight at words of commendation about it. I have seen some book notices which have spoken well of it and of me, as having probable success when I ventured farther into the literary world, and when I am alone at night I read these words over and over again, till my ambition becomes a perfect fever, and I long to keep on and on till I reach the topmost round in the ladder of fame. I was a little disappointed in auntie's letter. She was pleased and surprised of course, but she said, "I hope some day my Phyllis' pen may write something that the world shall be better for reading. A consecrated pen can do great good in the world, and your gift is one, dear child, that you may make of great service to the Master."

If any one but auntie had written this, I should have been provoked; as it was, I was disappointed. Would she like me to write a volume of sermons, I wonder? I don't care about doing good in the world. I am willing to make people happier, and it is a little pet theory of mine, which I delight to put into practice, that it is every one's duty to make all they come in contact with as happy as pleasant words and little

kind actions can make them. There is n't any use in going through the world looking as grum and cross as if there was not any sunshine in it; and sullenness is just as contagious as good humor. But as to doing good, I prefer to leave that for ministers, who pretend to make it their business in life.

Mr. Vernon was very much interested in my success with the organ, and told me that he was disinterested enough to hope that I would be equal to the new position, for he knew I would enjoy it so much more than playing at the mission. He promised to call at the church for me after rehearsal last night and bring me home. I was surprised, when the practice was over and I descended from the organ loft into the dimly-lighted church below, to find that he was accompanied by a friend of whom I have often heard him speak. He had been a roommate in college, though one year behind Mr. Vernon in the course, and was now spending his last year at a theological seminary. I had often heard Mr. Vernon speak enthusiastically of his ability and talent, always coupled with the regret that he was too indolent to make the best of himself. He could rank among the best students without applying himself at all, but simply by drifting indolently, and Mr. Vernon often spoke warmly of what he might accomplish if his ambition was

only aroused or a little energy developed. I can well believe that Mr. Landreth is indolent, for he shows it in every movement, even in the languor with which he speaks. He is tall, and quite handsome, and he has a very charming way of paying compliments, I discovered. He had read my novel, and told me how anxious he had been to meet the author, and how he had persuaded Mr. Vernon to let him accompany him this evening, without first waiting for my consent to the introduction. Altogether I was quite pleased with him, and though he is going to be a minister, he isn't at all preacher-like or professional.

He asked my permission to call on his next visit to the city. He had promised to preach for Mr. Vernon to-day, or I rather fancy he would have been at Dr. Vincent's church. I think he will be quite an agreeable acquisition to my list of acquaintances.

SEPTEMBER 8. I did not mean to neglect you for so long a time, old friend, but I went away without you to spend my summer vacation with an old school acquaintance, who became a friend when she happened to come across my novel in a library and recognized my name on the title-page. I cannot recall that we were very great friends at school. I have rather a sore remembrance of hearing her speak of me as that

"shabbily dressed little dowdy who hasn't a thing in the world to recommend her," but I will be magnanimous now, and forget all that, since she seems to be oblivious of it.

I wish I had had you with me, dear journal, that I might have recorded some of the gayeties with which my summer has been filled to overflowing, but I will put it down collectively as the most delightful two months that can be imagined. Eleanor has married a very rich man, and has every whim gratified, but I do not envy her. It seems a very shallow life at best, to have no higher ambition than to make a brilliant appearance in society, and I think if I was married I should want to be sure there was some real affection existing between myself and my husband. Eleanor does not seem to have any feeling for her husband, save that he is a convenient banker and always ready to furnish her with whatever she desires; and for his part he merely seems to be very proud of her, just as he is of his handsome house and fine grounds. I have come home quite rested and ready for another winter of teaching, and I hope I shall be able to reserve some time for literary work.

OCTOBER 24. Be a real friend to me, dear journal, and tell me what to do. If you didn't love any one, would you be willing to marry a man who loved you very dearly, although he

knew that you had nothing but a liking for him? It would be a pleasant change to have a beautiful home, with abundance of leisure and means to gratify one's literary ambitions, but somehow I cannot make it seem anything but a barter—a cold-blooded exchange of one's self for comfort. I will not ask any one but you, for I know what advice I would receive.

I have a letter from Eleanor in my hand, full of friendly advice, and it is just what every one would say. It is not for the sake of a home or the luxury I might have, that I stop to think it over, but because I might have so much better opportunities of making the most of myself. Not even for that, though, can I bring myself to make the sacrifice, for that is what it seems to me, notwithstanding all the worldly advantages in the other side of the scale. I could not respect myself again, and I am sure I should only reap unhappiness. No, no, a hundred times no, were the advantages to be gained twice as attractive.

NOVEMBER 5. I have quite settled down to my usual routine, though I have enough delightful times to break the monotony. I believe I am a restless, dissatisfied sort of a creature, anyway. I thought I would be perfectly happy when my novel came out, but somehow I find myself still longing for something else—I do n't

know exactly what—and when I have time to think I am quite restless. What is it that I want to be quite content? I suppose it is the ungratified cravings of my intense ambition. Well, I must not stop to sentimentalize upon your pages, for I have some letters to write to-night and it is growing late. I have been enjoying a correspondence with Sydney Landreth this winter. He writes such bright, clever letters that they are really an intellectual treat to read and answer.

DECEMBER 1. I will turn over a blank leaf and make this entry on a new page, dear journal, for I have turned over a page in my life. Something has happened to-night that will alter my whole life. It half frightens me to realize it, and yet I am too happy to wish it otherwise for a moment. Surely you can guess, old journal? You are not more surprised than I am, and yet I wonder how I have been so unconscious of it all.

Yes, I am engaged, and I am, after my usual fashion of doing things, heart and soul in love with Sydney Landreth. Mr. Vernon was right; ambition alone could never make me happy. I have too great a capacity for love. Isn't it strange it never entered into my plans or thoughts for the future, and yet it has been a part of my life after all. Not even to you will I

tell what Sydney said. It is too sacred, too precious, for any one else to know, or even to be intrusted to paper, but I am unutterably content. I am as foolish as any love-sick heroine that I ever ridiculed in a romance. I want to press the shining circlet upon my finger to my lips again and again, to assure myself that all this is real and not a dream.

I need not give up my ambition after all, for Sydney says he is proud of me and will rejoice in every honor I can gain; but love comes first now, and I am glad to have it so.

CHAPTER VII.

GIRLHOOD DAYS CLOSING.

JANUARY 1. How quickly the last twelve months have passed away. It seems but a few weeks since I made the first entry in the new year which has become the old. I am wondering now whether the year upon which I am just entering can bring me any greater happiness than the last year did. We spent New Year's eve together, Sydney and I, talking of our plans for the future, the happiness that we would find in each other. I can't realize that I am to be a minister's wife, and when Sydney told me of a call he had received from a small country church, and wanted me to talk it over with him, I could not realize that it had anything to do with me, except that I was, of course, interested in all his plans.

I do privately wish that he had chosen some other profession, for it is a pity to have his talents wasted in some humdrum little country place; but after all I can comfort myself by reflecting that there is just as much room at the top of his profession as in any other, so I need not feel that it is of no use to be ambitious for

him. A quiet little country place would give us each a good opportunity to study and grow mentally, and we would have a great deal more time to enjoy each other's society than if Sydney had a large city church. If he accepts this call he will go to his new home in February, and he wants us to be married in April. It will be a very short engagement, but Sydney will be so lonely and I shall see so little of him after he once begins his work, that I did not feel like making any objections. I wonder what his family are like and whether we will be congenial. Like myself, Sydney is an orphan, and his mother's sister has brought up both Sydney and his sister Linda, and has always been as devoted to them as their own mother could have been.

Last night I ventured to ask Sydney what his aunt was like, and whether he thought she would like me. I suppose I was just conceited enough to think he would say, "Why, of course she will like you, darling. How could she help it?"

At all events I was a little hurt when he said, half hopefully and half doubtfully,

"Well, I hope she will, for Aunt Penelope is very strong in her likes and dislikes, and it will be so much pleasanter for you if she does like you."

I suppose I looked a little downcast, for Sydney went on to say,

"She is just as devoted to me as if I were her only son instead of her only nephew, and so she naturally thinks, as I suppose all mothers do under such circumstances, that no one can be quite worthy of the honor of being my wife. Of course it is unreasonable, but I know I cannot bring her to realize as I do what a treasure I have won. I hope you will try to make her like you, and humor her a little if it is necessary."

"I will try, Sydney," I said with a sinking heart; then remembering that I was on very friendly terms with two maiden ladies in the house whom every one else seemed to be in awe of, my spirits rose. I had seldom met any one with whom I could not be "good friends," and it was hardly probable that Sydney's aunt would be an exception, especially when I meant to love her.

"Now, Phyllis, I hope I have not made you think that my aunt will be a very unpleasant personage to encounter," said Sydney, studying my face intently. "I only wanted to explain to you that you must not be disappointed if she does not seem very cordial at first; it is not her way to be at all demonstrative, even with Linda and me, and she has very inflexible ideas of right and wrong by which she measures every

one. She would be very much shocked to think that you had ever been to the theatre, or that you were worldly enough to dance; and proud as I am of your clever novel, I think I had better not show it to her until after she has met you."

"You had better get a mould into which I will fit myself," I cried despairingly. "Why, Sydney, she will never like me, I am sure. I should be saying or doing something to shock her constantly, even when I was watching my every word and movement. What shall I do?"

I nearly cried, I was so dismayed at the prospect, and Sydney tried to reassure me as soon as he saw how his words had made me feel.

"I ought to have had more sense than to tell you all this," he said remorsefully. "I only thought that 'forewarned would be forearmed;' but forget all that I have said and be your own bright, winsome self, and I am sure she will love you. I know you will be great friends with my sister."

Sydney seemed to be so distressed over the effect of his words that I said no more about my uneasiness about his aunt's probable feelings towards me. I have looked forward to loving her and having her welcome me as a loved daughter, and I cannot bear to think of any other reception. I will not despair yet, how-

ever. Even if she does not like me at first, I will try to be patient and win her love, and I am vain enough to think that I can succeed. Sydney showed me her picture, and she has a bright strong face, though her lips are set together in a way that denotes great firmness of character. I hope I shall never come into collision with her will, for I am obstinate enough myself if any one tries to force me, though I can never withstand an affectionate appeal for a moment.

Dear old journal, can you realize that only three more months of my individual existence are before me; that after that I shall lose my own identity in another's? Sydney pretends to be afraid that he will soon be known only as his wife's husband, but there is no danger of that. I am very proud of his talent, and I know I could never have loved him if I had not felt that he was intellectually my superior. Eleanor knows of my engagement, and she wrote me a letter which seemed very disagreeable, bidding me enjoy my fool's paradise as long as I could, for I would soon enough regret it. That is all she knows about my feelings. I should have regretted it far sooner if I had taken her advice, and made what she would have called a brilliant match. It is always safe to let one's heart decide such matters.

JANUARY 24. This week will be Sydney's last at home, and his aunt has written me a very pleasant letter, inviting me to spend it with them. I am a coward about meeting them, and much as I want to see Sydney, I am glad that I cannot leave my scholars for that length of time, and can only make arrangements to spend from Friday till Monday away. I wish Sydney had not said anything to me about the possibility of their not liking me, for I feel so shy and self-conscious that I can hardly expect to make a good impression. It is a visit I dread, and I heartily wish it was over and I was safely at home again.

FEBRUARY 2. The ordeal is over at last, and it was not half as trying as I had expected it to be. If Sydney's aunt is always as kind to me as she is now, I shall be perfectly happy, and I know I shall love his sister dearly. I had a very pleasant visit, but I was not sorry when the time came for my departure, for I could not help feeling that I was under scrutiny. Of course they could not help criticising me, and it was most natural that they should be curious concerning a new-comer into the family; but they were so thoughtful of my feelings and so kind that I could not resent it. Sydney seemed delighted at his aunt's approval. I really believe he had expected her to strongly object to me.

It is very evident that with all her pleasant ways the family are somewhat in awe of her, and never incur her disapproval if they can help it. She must have a strong character, for Sydney yields to her in everything just as if he were a child.

I know I was not my natural self at all, for I kept continual guard over my lips lest I should mention some of the dangerous subjects that Sydney had warned me about. They may like the quiet, exceedingly proper Miss Graham, but when they become thoroughly acquainted with me I tremble for the opinion they will have of the real Phyllis, who is thoughtless and impulsive, and whose tongue rattles off all the nonsense that comes into her head. If I thought it pleased Sydney better I would try to cultivate this extreme propriety; but when I asked him rather anxiously if he would like me to be so quiet all the time, he looked horrified, and begged me not to alter myself in the least, or I would not suit him at all.

I am afraid I shall never suit any one but Sydney in my new *role* as a minister's wife; but, after all, he is the only one in the world I care to please, so it doesn't make any difference.

FEBRUARY 10. My first check came to-day from the publishers', and it was almost as delightful as receiving the first copy of the book.

I suppose I may consider that it has had a successful sale, since my first profits have a little more than covered my share of the expense. I shall spend this money in my preparations for the wedding, and buy lots of lovely, dainty garments to make me attractive in Sydney's eyes. I am afraid my interest in literary work has sadly flagged just now. I would rather live a novel than write one, and I enjoy Sydney's daily letters far more than the writings of the most profound authors. I am beginning to believe that I am not quite as intellectual as I used to think I was.

APRIL 3. For the last time I will write in these pages as Phyllis Graham, and glad as I am that to-morrow is to be my wedding-day, yet I have a subdued feeling, notwithstanding my happiness, as I sit here with my pen in my hand. I am almost homesick at the thought of leaving this room which has been my home for the last two years. It looks desolate and forlorn enough to-night, with all my Lares and Penates packed ready for transportation to my new home, my piano and pictures boxed, and everything ready for the journey except my box of books, which I will close up as soon as I have put you in among them. I shall not take you on my wedding journey, dear journal, for I shall be too happy to even think of you, and you will

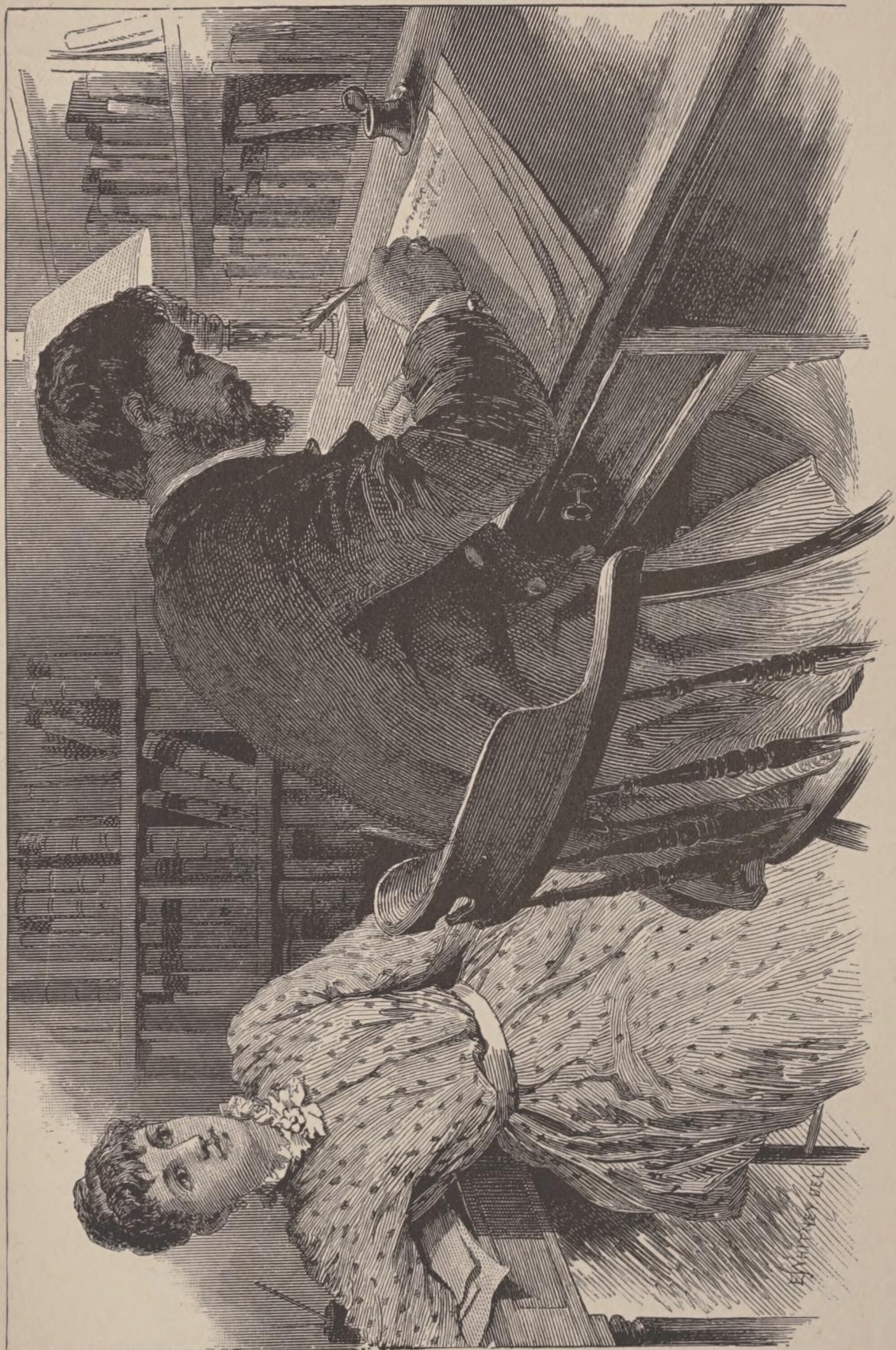
only be in my way. We are to have a very quiet wedding in Dr. Vincent's church; only Sydney's family and a few intimate friends of mine are to be present; and then we are to start at once upon our trip.

I had a sweet letter from dear aunt to-day, wishing me much happiness and regretting that she could not be with me to-morrow. I should think it would almost frighten her to think of my being married, after her own married life has been so full of trials and disappointments. She does not speak of those though, brave, unselfish, uncomplaining woman that she is, but only tells me of the happiness of married life and the veil of tenderness that mutual love draws over all infirmities of temper. I don't believe I shall ever be half as good as she is. I do n't think that patience and love and forbearance should be all on one side, and I am afraid I could not keep on loving Sydney if he became selfish and tyrannical. I am not afraid of that though; I am willing to trust my life in his hands, and believe that he will always love and care for me. He will not disappoint me; my only fear is that I may not be to him all of help and inspiration that I long to be.

I surely ought to realize what is going to happen to-morrow, after the weeks of busy preparation I have been passing through, but it all

seems half a dream. It is a dream of happiness though. If I thought Sydney could ever grow cold or indifferent to me, if I thought we could ever love each other less, I would draw back at this late hour, for I cannot imagine anything more desolate than a loveless life. Now that I know how sweet a thing it is to be loved, I do not think I could live without it, and I verily believe it would break my heart to have anything come between Sydney and myself. If I did not trust his love so implicitly and believe in him so entirely, it would frighten me to think that the words will be uttered to-morrow which will bind our lives together "until death do us part." Till death! Could anything be more dreadful than to be bound so closely if one did not love with all her heart and soul! Good-by, dear journal. My girlhood closes to-night, and for the last time I record my name in your pages

PHYLLIS GRAHAM.



Beside Still Waters. Page 77.

CHAPTER VIII.

SUNDAY IN THE NEW HOME.

APRIL 18. Do you feel bewildered, dear old book, when I take you out for the first time in these partly new and partly old surroundings? There are enough of my own personal belongings about me to make you feel at home, but this large, old-fashioned room, with its well-filled bookcases lining the walls, is new, and if we could see out into the dark, the crooked, straggling streets of this little country town would prove that you are indeed in a strange place.

We came home last night. Yes, this quiet little place and these two rooms are our home. Sitting there at that large desk, with his head bent over the sermon upon which he is at work, is my husband. I feel a ridiculous little blush creeping over my face as I write that word. I am used to the relationship, but not quite to the name. I had to stop writing for a moment and let my eyes rest on him so lovingly that it almost seemed as if he must feel the gaze like a caressing touch upon his head. How I do love him! I am so proud of him too, and every day I discover something new to admire in him. I

have promised that I would not speak for two hours, for he has his sermon to prepare for next Sunday, and it is hard work at best to settle his thoughts to his work after all that has happened during the last two weeks, so I will not interrupt him by a gesture even.

These days since I wrote here last have been days of the most unalloyed happiness, without a cloud to mar their brightness; and as their happiness has consisted in being with my precious husband, I cannot see why all the rest of my life should not be equally blissful. If married people all loved each other as we do, I am sure that there would never be any quarrels or disagreements between them. I cannot even imagine our speaking unkindly to each other. I know I could never say a word to grieve him, no matter what provocation I had, and I am equally sure that Sydney would never give me any provocation; so how could we ever quarrel?

The hand of the clock is approaching the expiration of the second hour, and in a few moments Sydney's pen will be thrown aside and his thoughtful frown will relax as his eyes meet mine with a smile. Then the rest of the evening will be mine, and how we will enjoy every moment of it! This is an uneventful record to make, when so much has happened since I wrote last; but I can think of nothing, write of nothing,

but Sydney, for every thought is centred in him.

APRIL 25. Little did I think that the next time I wrote in these pages I should record our first quarrel. We have quarrelled already, Sydney and I; but it was all my fault. I am so ashamed to think that with all my love for Sydney, and desire to make him happy, I should have been angry enough to say hateful, taunting things to him. Sydney has forgiven me, but I feel as if I could never forgive myself, and if my tears could wash out all remembrance of my hasty words, they would have been blotted out already.

This was how it happened. We have breakfast as early on Sunday as on any other morning, and when we came up stairs and Sydney sat down to read his sermon over, I took up a novel that I had nearly finished the night before, and sitting down by the window was soon absorbed in its contents. Suddenly I heard Sydney's voice in a tone of shocked surprise,

"Phyllis, what are you reading?"

I held the novel up for him to see the title.

"Why, what do you mean by having such a book in your hands on Sunday?" Sydney said in annoyed tones. "Put it away at once and take something more suitable to the day."

There was enough of a tone of command in

his voice to arouse all the opposition in my nature.

"I shall put it away when it is time to go to church," I said coolly, pretending to go on with my reading.

"You will put it away *at once*," Sydney said authoritatively. "I need hardly remind you how short a time it is since you promised to obey me, and I hope you will not set me at defiance so soon."

Poor Sydney! He could hardly have made a more unfortunate speech, for then I was quite determined upon no account to yield.

"Let me tell you once for all," I exclaimed angrily, "I will not be *commanded* by you or any one else. If you had *asked* me to put aside the book, I should have done so at once, but now I will not. Of course I would not read a novel on Sunday before any of the pious people in your church, who would be shocked to death at the idea of the minister's wife doing such a thing; but I do not think that you and I in the privacy of our own rooms need keep up any pretence."

"What do you mean by pretence?" asked Sydney sternly, an angry flush on his face.

"Pretending to believe in all that your profession obliges you to say in the pulpit," I answered. "I never for a moment led you to think

that I believed in anything of the kind. I told you that I never believed but in one person's religion in my life; I told you I never meant to be hypocritical enough to pretend that I was better than I was; and you never seemed to care what I thought or said. You have not given me reason to believe that you expected me to feel any differently, and now you try to make me believe that you are shocked to see me with a novel on Sunday. There is no use in trying to impose upon me. I hope you can make your congregation think that you devoutly believe all you teach them, but I shall respect you more for being honest with me."

"Do you mean to say that you do not believe in my sincerity?" asked Sydney wonderingly. "Do you suppose I do not believe all that I am preaching?"

"Of course you do not," I answered. "I do not see how you can expect me to think so. We have been married two weeks. In all that time you have never said or done a single thing which would lead me to suppose that you were any less of a heathen than myself, minister though you are. If you were in earnest, surely you would be so full of your work just now at the beginning of your ministry that you could hardly speak or think of anything else. Now you need not look so angrily at me. Every word

I say is true. Can you remember saying a single word to me on the subject of religion since I have known you? You are as great a humbug as every one else, and now you expect me to begin to live a life of pretence too. I will not do it, and you cannot make me."

Sydney's next words would have been very angry ones, to judge from the expression of his face, but just as he opened his lips there was a knock at the study door. I darted into the bedroom and buried my hot, flushed face in the cool pillows. How could Sydney have been so unkind, was my first thought, and I felt as if I could never forget his harsh words. I heard him go down stairs to the parlor and I could hear the hum of voices in conversation. My anger began to cool as tears came to my eyes, and remembering my share in the quarrel, I angrily tossed away the novel which I had still been tightly clasping, wishing that I had done it at first instead of being so childishly persistent. Suppose Sydney had not spoken pleasantly to me; did I not love him enough to have passed it over in silence? And what dreadful things I had said to him! My heart ached with penitent sorrow as I recalled my slanderous words. Surely Sydney would never forgive me. He would never be loving and tender to me again, but there would always be that stern look on

his face and that cold, hard tone in his voice. All the sunshine and love had gone out of our new life, just because of my hasty temper. I had deserved to have him very angry with me and I could not expect him to forgive me, or if he did forgive, he could not love me again. If I could only take back those hateful words! but it was too late now.

I heard the front door open and shut. Evidently the visitor had departed, and in another moment I heard Sydney coming slowly up stairs. My heart beat tumultuously as I listened. Would he come to me, or was he too angry? The door of the study opened and I heard him enter the room, but instead of looking for me, he sat down at his desk in silence. I waited as long as I could and then rose and pushed aside the curtain. Sydney's head was resting upon his folded arms, and he did not look up.

"Sydney, will you forgive me?" I cried penitently, kneeling down beside him and resting my tear-stained face on his shoulder. "I do not deserve to have you speak to me again; but if you only knew how miserable I am, I think perhaps you would see that I am being punished for my wicked temper. Do speak to me, if it is only to scold me!" I need not have feared that I would not be forgiven. In a moment Sydney's

loving arms were about me and he was holding me close to his heart, kissing away the tears that flowed more freely than before.

"It is I who should ask forgiveness," he said tenderly. "I ought not to have spoken as I did. I have no right to command, only to ask my wife to let me guide her sometimes. I do not know what possessed me, but I was dissatisfied with my sermon and so I vented my irritation on you. Now, darling, it is growing near church-time, but I feel that we must have a little explanation to put matters right between us. Will you listen and believe me?"

"Yes," I murmured.

"I deserve every word of reproach that you uttered. I acknowledge with shame that I have not given you much reason to think that I was in earnest; but I do want you to believe me when I tell you that I mean every word I utter in the pulpit and a hundred times more. I am not fit to be a minister of the gospel; but if God will accept me, worthless as I am, and give me His grace, I want to serve him. I know what he has done for me, and I want to bring others to him. I have been cowardly about speaking to you of these things. I have been afraid of your ridicule, and I have laughed, when I knew it was wrong, at some of your speeches; but please forgive all these things now. I believe

that God called me to this work, and I think there is no grander, nobler work in the world than bringing souls to the Saviour. Won't you help me in my life-work, Phyllis? Won't you let me know that my wife is in sympathy with me and is trying to strengthen my weakness and help me grow in grace? I need your help so much."

"I will try," I answered, lifting my tearful eyes to his face. "I have not believed in religion; but if you do I want to, too. I am not fit to be your wife, Sydney; I shall only be a hindrance to you instead of a help; but indeed I will try to please you in everything after this. I love you better for what you have told me than I ever did before, and I do believe you are sincere. And, Sydney," I hesitated.

"Well, my dearest wife?"

"I said I would not let you command me, but I will take it all back. I will obey you in anything, for I do love you enough to submit my will to yours, if I stop to think."

"I shall never test you," Sydney answered, with a loving caress. "Love does not need commands. I can trust you to gratify my wishes when I put them in the form of requests."

"But, Sydney, just to show me that you have forgiven me, give me one little command and see how willingly I will obey," I pleaded.

"Then if you will have it so, I want you to dry your eyes and bathe your face, so that in half an hour you will be ready to go to church with me, looking like a happy bride instead of a poor little wife whose husband has ill-used her already."

"I will not let you talk so," I said, putting my hand over his mouth; then remembering that he needed every moment of the remaining time to prepare for the service, I left him to himself and went away to dress.

I felt a little shy and self-conscious as I started to church at Sydney's side. I suppose it was quite natural that the minister's bride should be an object of curiosity, and perhaps it was intended to be rather flattering that no attempt was made to disguise the lively interest every one took in me; nevertheless it was very trying. I think Sydney was rather uncomfortable, too, at the idea of preaching before me for the first time, and I was glad that we had had a little talk before we started, and I had told him how he would always have my sympathy, and that no thought of ridicule or criticism would ever cross my mind in connection with him and his work.

The church is very pretty, and though small compared to the city churches I have been used to, is plenty large enough for the congregation.

I was quite surprised to find how my strong personal interest in the minister made every word of the service intensely interesting to me. I must make all due allowance for my wifely partiality, but I do think, dear journal, that when Sydney acquires the ease that will come to him with longer practice, he will be a very eloquent preacher. If I had not known that he really meant all he said, I should have admired his sermon as a piece of fine composition; but remembering that he had told me that he fully believed every word that he uttered from the pulpit, it thrilled me strangely. His text was, "I will arise and go unto my Father," and he spoke so eloquently of the joy of receiving the Father's forgiveness that I could not help wondering whether it was not something like the happiness I felt this morning when I knew that Sydney had forgiven me and loved me, in spite of all my unloving words.

After church rather an ordeal awaited me in being introduced to a great many of the congregation who were waiting to speak to me. I tried to be as cordial as they were in their greeting to me, but I was very glad when Sydney took me away. I did not have the pleasure of walking home with him, for the lady with whom we board, and her son, walked with us. When we reached our room, Sydney put down his sermon

and took me in his arms. "Well, little wife, were you ashamed of me?"

"Oh, Sydney!" but I will not even write down in these pages all I said; it gratified Sydney, though he pretended to think that love had blinded my eyes.

I do want to be good. I want to be a real help to Sydney, but I don't know how to begin. I believe good people always have family prayers; I know auntie always tried to, until uncle said it made him too nervous. When he had given up preaching entirely and went to the office every morning where he was engaged on a paper, auntie used to conduct them; but when uncle gave up business and was at home all the time, of course they had to be given up. I will suggest to Sydney to-night that we have family prayers, and I think it will please him. This first Sunday in my new home would have been a happy day if I could blot out the remembrance of our quarrel this morning.

CHAPTER IX.

A MONTH LATER.

MAY 18. Just to think that I have been here a whole month already! Sydney was very much afraid that the time would hang heavily on my hands, but it has not. I have been busy in learning to feel that this is my home, and in making the acquaintance of the people who are to be my friends. I wish we were housekeeping; I should so enjoy doing everything for Sydney's comfort myself; but I suppose we shall come to that by-and-by.

I am very happy here. But there is one little thing that troubles me, and it is so small and trifling a matter that I am ashamed to let it annoy me. I am out of money, and every now and then I have some little want to gratify, and I look into my empty purse with a feeling of dependence that is altogether new to me. Of course Sydney has never thought that I might have any use for a little money, and so it has not occurred to him to give me any. I can't imagine that I shall ever be able to ask him as a matter of course for any amount I need, as I have often heard wives ask. Theoretically, I suppose that

since we are one, there need not be any mine or thine about the salary; it is a common fund upon which we both may draw with perfect freedom when we have occasion; but practically it all seems to be Sydney's, and I have the uncomfortable feeling that I am asking a gift when I need any. I suppose if I had been used to going to uncle and asking him for whatever I wanted, I would not be so sensitive about it; but as all the money I have ever spent I have earned by my own exertions, and felt that I had a perfect right to spend as I pleased, I am unusually independent in my feelings.

I am not blaming Sydney in the least, for I cannot expect him to know how it feels to have an empty purse and be too proud to ask to have it refilled, but I do not think that we are beginning in just the right way to solve this "domestic money problem," as I have heard it called. I think it would be better for both of us if I could put my pride in my pocket and talk the matter over frankly with Sydney, telling him that I have occasion to use money, and as it is a hard thing to ask him continually for what I need, he would make it easier for me by putting some money at my disposal in such a way that I would not feel that I had to humiliate myself to ask for it. I wish the money was mine, and that I was the one to provide for Sydney's wants. I

think I am more impulsively generous than Sydney is, for it makes me supremely happy to give; and when I love any one as I do my husband, I should so enjoy gratifying his every wish before he had time to express it.

If I only had some way of earning money here, I would much rather never touch Sydney's; but I am afraid I shall have to lay aside my feelings and mention the matter to him, as I see no prospect of my funds being replenished from any miraculous source. I will put it off until to-morrow though, in the hope that by that time it may have occurred to him to inquire into the state of my finances without any suggestion from me.

MAY 19. It was a vain hope. Sydney's mind is probably above such petty matters as pin-money, so I tried to put aside all my sensitiveness this afternoon and go to him as a matter of course.

"Sydney," I began bravely, "I want to ask you for something."

"Well, dear?" and he looked up encouragingly from his paper.

Now I had quite made up my mind that I would not begin by apologizing for what was a right and a natural thing to do, but I forgot my resolutions and began,

"I hate to ask you, darling, and I would n't if

I could help it, but I can't. Would you mind—giving me a little money?"

It was hard work to force out the last few words, but Sydney did not seem to notice what an effort it had cost me.

"How much do you want?" he asked.

I mentioned some of the little things I needed, and their probable price, and Sydney counted out the exact amount and handed it to me, without any remark, going back again to his paper.

I thanked him, but when I went into the bedroom to put it away in my poor little empty purse, I threw it on the bed and made a face at it.

"I will never ask for another cent as long as I live!" I said to myself defiantly. "If I have to have every cent doled out to me so carefully, I will go without anything rather than take it; so!"

I had a hurt feeling that I knew was wholly unreasonable. Oh, why couldn't I have been frank enough to tell Sydney how I felt about asking for money, and just come to some understanding about the matter? Of course he does not know how I feel about it, and I will not blame him for making me pose as a beggar. Now I am sensible enough to know and believe that if he loved me enough to ask me to share

his life, if he chose me from all others to be his wife, then he surely would not grudge supplying my wants, and I need not feel so sore and hurt about this money ; yet in spite of this sensible reasoning I am childish enough to want to cry over my disappointed feeling.

If he had only handed me his pocketbook and said cordially, as if he really loved to give it to me,

“Take what you want, darling, for all that I have is yours,” it would have been hard enough then to help myself to any of it, but it would have gratified me to know that he gave it freely and generously. As it was, I felt humiliated at having it doled out to me as a matter of necessity instead of a free gift.

I will not feel aggrieved at Sydney, for of course he does not know how I feel; but I never, never will ask him for another cent. Even as I make this resolution I am conscious that I am making a mistake, and that for the sake of our after happiness we ought to settle this matter now, but I am too cowardly and sore over it to mention money again to Sydney. Perhaps some time, when we have been married longer, I shall be braver. In the meantime I am going to try my hardest, and see if I cannot do some writing that will help me out of my difficulty, for I have plenty of time for it. *I will not let myself feel*

hurt at Sydney, for he is always right, and I would rather be in the wrong when we have a disagreement than find a flaw in my idol. I love to think that he is strong and good and perfect, where I am weak and impulsive and erring, and I will never let myself blame him ever so slightly.

MAY 25. We are so happy together! I wonder if we will always be. I have seen so many married people who seemed just to take each other as a matter of course, and who never thought of indulging in any of the little demonstrations of affection that make life such a beautiful thing. How jealously I mean to guard against the very first remissness in affection and courtesy, for I fancy it must be the wife's fault when the husband ceases to be a lover. If I thought Sydney would ever love me less, I should not want to live.

There is just one thing to keep me from being blissfully happy, and strangely enough it is the very last thing that I ever imagined would trouble me. I wish I could make up my mind once for all about the reality of God. I don't want death to part Sydney and me for ever; and young and strong though we are, death might come to one or the other of us even before this year has run its course. If Sydney is going to heaven, I must go there too. Though I believe

in a vague sort of way in all that Sydney says in his sermons, and though I have hours of anxious self-questioning afterward, yet I cannot bring myself to the intense realization of the truth which is necessary before I can go any farther. I feel as if I was groping blindly after the truth, and though I am trying to see God, yet a cloud is before my eyes and I cannot even believe that he is behind it.

One petition in Sydney's prayer last Sunday morning has haunted me ever since, it seemed like such a cruel thing to ask. He prayed for those who had not yet come to Christ that "they might have a terrible unrest which should not leave them until they found the peace which passeth all understanding." A terrible unrest! I shivered a little as I listened to the words. What if that prayer should be answered for me, and this vague uneasiness should become indeed "a terrible unrest" from which I could find no escape day or night!

If it is all true that Sydney says, there is a life I have never dreamed of, a life of love for God as real and earnest as my love for Sydney, only far greater. If I could once feel with all my heart that God is good and great and infinitely loving and pitiful, then I might love him; but my most earnest efforts do not seem to bring him near me. What shall I do? If there were

no such thing as death in the universe, and I knew I could have Sydney for ever, whether I became a Christian or not, I would not be so anxious over my unbelief; but every morning I wonder whether this may not be our last day together, whether sudden death may not come between us, and separate us for ever. I have no faith in prayer, but this morning I prayed a strange petition. It was like an aimless cry into space, I had so little feeling that my cry was heard or would be answered. I prayed that God would make me believe in him, and would give me faith to pray. It was a half-hearted prayer, but Sydney says God hears the faintest call, so it may be that an answer will come.

I try to talk to him sometimes and tell him my doubts and perplexities and fears, but somehow he does not seem to understand them. He thinks that I am a Christian already, though I have been careless and inconsistent, and that I am simply worrying myself because I am not more emotional and full of feeling. He tells me that some people never have the same warmth of feeling that others do, and that my experience may be wholly individual. I cannot comfort myself by believing this, however. I know I do not love God. I know I have never experienced any of that wonderful joy and peace that Sydney says come with reconcilia-

tion to God, and I cannot be satisfied to go on as I am. I do want to be good, and I enjoy prayers morning and evening because that seems like a step in the right direction; but I must not stop here. I know that if I ever do become a Christian I shall love God with all my heart and soul, and shall want to give my whole life up to His service; but will that peace ever come to me? Perhaps it is to be my punishment for those years of unbelief, that I never shall be allowed a firm and tranquil faith. Could there be a sadder prospect than a lifetime of "terrible unrest"?

CHAPTER X.

TWO SOURCES OF DISQUIET.

MAY 28. I always imagined that the life of a minister's wife was a continuous round of going to missionary meetings, sewing societies, and other things of that kind, and that there were always sick women to be visited and comforted with bowls of soup and packages of tea. It has been a pleasant surprise to find that there is absolutely nothing that I am expected to do, and there are no societies of any kind for me to go to; so I have the best of excuses for staying at home. I have not even been asked to take a class in Sunday-school, as there are plenty of teachers. I had made up my mind that I would refuse if I was asked, for when I am groping in darkness myself I will not profess to teach others. All my duties are comprised in receiving and returning calls, so I have plenty of time to write when Sydney is busy over his sermons and to enjoy his society when he is at liberty. When he is through writing he reads his sermons over to me, and I do dearly love to feel that I am of some help to him in the way of criticism and suggestion.

I have written a children's story lately and sent it to a juvenile magazine. Just when I was beginning to give up all hopes of its acceptance the check came. I was delighted this morning when I opened the envelope, which I knew was too flat and thin to contain the returned manuscript, and found the check, which seemed to me a very generous payment. It did give me such a comfortable feeling of independence to have some money of my own once more, and know that I had not to choose between being penniless and asking Sydney for money.

My first impulse was to carry it to him triumphantly and give it to him to put with his other money; but a moment of reflection convinced me that I should then be as uncomfortable as ever, for it would be quite as trying to ask Sydney for some of my own money as for some of his. I contented myself with showing it to him and telling him of my success, and then I tucked the pink crisp slip which represented such relief of mind to me snugly away in my purse. I have given myself one pleasure out of it. This afternoon I ordered a book for Sydney that he has spoken of several times and wished that he might have. Sydney's salary is so small that it will only economically supply our necessities, and not leave any surplus for books, music, pleasure-trips, or anything of the kind. It will

be a delight to me to surprise him with a new book now and then.

JUNE 5. My prayer has been answered. I realize God as I had never thought it possible. I am continually oppressed with a sense of His presence and his greatness. It terrifies me and makes me more unhappy than I was before over my unbelief. Oh, how *do* people become Christians? It sounds so easy when I ask Sydney. It is nothing but a complete surrender of everything; and it surely seems as if it would be a very easy thing to acknowledge God's right to everything, when, whether I acknowledge it or not, all things are in His hand. I cannot love Him though. I cannot see how there can be love where there is such fear. "Perfect love casteth out fear," Sydney read this morning; but my only feeling is that of terror, when I realize I am wholly powerless to draw a breath by my own strength, and that at any moment, if God willed it so, this mysterious thing that I call life might cease, and I should be swept out into an eternity of darkness. This thought clouds all the brightness of a life that otherwise would be perpetual sunshine.

I try not to be gloomy and worry Sydney with my depression, but underneath all that I say and do is this unrest which will not be quieted. I ask myself what I would give to

purchase peace. It seems to me as if it would be a very easy thing to sacrifice my ambition and myself. If I thought God demanded of me a complete surrender of every gift for his service, and called me to a life of rigid self-sacrifice and work, I do believe I could lay aside all my own bright plans for my life and gladly obey, to purchase immunity from this terrible fear of God. But there is one thing I would not give up: I could not give up Sydney, not though I knew my love for him would bar me from an eternity of happiness. Anything else I could surrender, but I could never willingly give up my beloved husband. I know God is all-powerful. If he will, he can lay his hand on my most precious treasure and snatch him away from me, but I could never give him up. How will this struggle end? I was far happier when I took no thought of God, and believed that I held my life in my own hands, than I am now.

JUNE 6. My anxiety makes me irritable, and I have more unkind words to repent of sorrowfully. This afternoon the burden upon my heart was so heavy that I could not bear it alone.

"Sydney," I cried, "I am so unhappy! Can't you help me? I can give God anything but you, and I can never, *never* give you up. Can I never find peace till I am willing to make that sacrifice too?"

"I think you are giving yourself needless unhappiness, dearest," Sydney answered. "There are some sacrifices for which God gives us strength in the hour of need, and we cannot lay it up beforehand. He will not give you dying grace while you need living grace, nor will He strengthen you for our separation while we are together. I wish you would not worry so about yourself, dear, for I trust you are all right."

"I am not all right," I cried, bursting into tears. "I do not see how you can think I am. You do not care how unhappy I am; you will not try to really help and comfort me. If I was almost a perfect stranger to you, but paid pew rent in your church, and came to you for counsel, I know just how beautifully you would talk to me; but as it is you don't care. You only want me to be bright and cheerful for your sake, no matter what becomes of me."

The moment the hasty words had forced themselves out of my lips I repented, and I waited for the rebuke I knew I richly deserved, but Sydney only drew me closely to him.

"Phyllis, do I deserve that?" he asked sorrowfully but tenderly, and his goodness to me made my heart nearly burst with penitence.

How can I help loving such a precious husband better than anything in the world? How can I help loving him better than my soul? Is

it my fault that I cannot be willing to tear him out of my heart and give him up?

JUNE 8. Last night it seemed as if all the unbelief and the wrong-doing of my life rose up like a nightmare before me, and I felt how black and sin-stained my heart was in God's sight. I dared not pray. I could not ask for forgiveness knowing that I had an idol in God's place which I would not, could not, dethrone; and a great sob escaped me in my despair.

It aroused Sydney at once.

"What is the matter, Phyllis?" he asked quickly. "Are you ill or in pain?"

"I am so wretched," I sobbed, nestling into his arms with the assurance that I had at least an earthly refuge. "Oh, Sydney, Sydney, I am so afraid of God. What shall I do?"

"Let us tell Him about it, darling," and side by side we knelt down, and he commended me so tenderly to God's love and forgiveness that I felt comforted. I could go to sleep then as my heart grew lighter, and this morning when the glad sun streamed brightly in our windows, the horror of great darkness that came over me last night seemed more like a dream than a reality.

JUNE 15. I have been trying hard to think of other things, and I have at least partially succeeded. Underneath everything else there is always a disquietude; but I am trying to be-

come absorbed in my writing during those hours when Sydney is busy and when my thoughts are apt to turn inward. I am not attempting anything very ambitious in the literary line, but it is so easy to find a profitable market for children's stories that it is a temptation to give up all more pretentious writing and weave them as fast as I can. I am doing quite a good deal of studying and practising too in these days, so time never hangs upon my hands.

The people in the church are very kind and friendly, but I do not feel especially drawn towards any of them. I never cared about having an intimate friend, and I think it will be discreet for me as a minister's wife not to have any friend to whom I would be tempted to speak with unwise confidence and freedom. I am glad sometimes that we are not in a city, where there would be so much outside distraction. As it is, we can be almost always together, and I never have even a momentary regret for the gayeties which I used to enjoy so keenly. It is strange how love can drive out every other feeling from the heart. Even my ambition now is only for Sydney and Sydney's sake. I am ambitious for him that he shall make the best use of his talents and ability, and I want to make the best of myself, that I may be more worthy of his love. I should still like to be gifted and

famous, because I would like to bring any honor I might win as a gift to Sydney, and I might feel myself more worthy of being his wife.

When I turn over the first pages of this journal the records seem so childish. I had not really begun to live then, and yet I felt as if I knew so much of life. If any one had told me then that my ambitions would be altogether different, and that I would be so perfectly happy in a life that is wholly at variance with what I enjoyed intensely then, I could not have believed such a prophecy. I feel as if fifteen years at least lay between me and those first childish entries. I have thought once or twice of tearing those leaves out and letting this journal begin with the first days of my married life; but on second thought I will leave them there, that I may not forget what my girlhood days were like.

After Sydney's summer vacation we are going to housekeeping, and I am so impatient to have a little nest of our own that I can hardly wait for the time to come. How happy we will be! I must spend as much of my time as possible in writing, that I may have something with which to help line the nest.

CHAPTER XI.

COMING INTO THE LIGHT.

SEPTEMBER 5. Our summer vacation is over and we are at home again, ready to begin our preparations for housekeeping. We have a dear little house into which we are going as soon as we make our necessary purchases. Aunt Penelope is going with us to help select furniture and carpets, and I shall be glad to have her advice, I am so inexperienced and ignorant about such things. I am too busy and happy to have any time to think about myself or of anything but the present. To-morrow we are going to the city to shop, and after that I know I shall be too busy to make any entries until we are safely settled in our own home. Our home! I love to repeat the words to myself.

OCTOBER 1. This is our first evening alone in our new home. Sydney's aunt has been spending the last three weeks with us, helping us get settled and initiating me into the mysteries of housekeeping. She has been very kind, and she is certainly an admirable housekeeper. I wonder whether I shall ever be as scrupulously neat and exact. Three or four times when

she has been tired she has been so frank in her criticisms of me that I was a little hurt and tempted to be very much vexed, but I would not let myself speak until I had time to remember how much help she had given us and how inefficient I must seem in her eyes; and then I was able to respond pleasantly. We are so different that I wonder how she can like me at all. She is so neat that not a stray thread ever escapes her notice, and I must confess I am sadly untidy, though I manage to keep things in sufficiently good order to please Sydney.

Aunt Penelope is not at all demonstrative, and I know that she looks upon affection that manifests itself in caresses as an evidence of weak-mindedness.

"There are a great many better and more sensible ways of showing your affection," she said. "If you try to make him comfortable, that is far more to the purpose."

Well, that sounds very sensible, but I am sure I do try to show my love for Sydney in practical ways, and I should be very unhappy if I had to leave out all the caresses which I enjoy so much; besides that, though Sydney is not naturally very demonstrative himself, I am sure he enjoys having me pet him, and I don't believe he would be willing to have me confine my interest in him strictly to his creature comforts.

Knowing how Aunt Penelope disapproved of such things, I did manage to keep all caresses for our own room, but I have been under a continual restraint, and it is pleasant to feel it removed now. I am free to go about the house humming like a cheerfully-disposed bee, for alas! I cannot sing, even when my heart is overflowing with happiness. I can seat myself by Sydney's study window with my portfolio in my lap, and scribble away, enjoying the fact that I am with him, without disturbing him in the least. That was another of the prohibited things while Aunt Penelope was here.

I enjoy housekeeping very much. Of course in my inexperience I make some ridiculous mistakes; but we laugh over them, and generally have so much fun at their expense that I cannot regret I am not too experienced ever to fail. I have a good girl, so we never suffer through my ignorance of culinary matters. I am trying to learn as fast as possible, for I want to be a good wife in every way. I want to shield Sydney from every discomfort that it is possible for me to, for I would not like to think he missed his aunt's care.

OCTOBER 28. It is over six months now since I tried to settle the great question that so constantly forces itself uppermost in my mind.

What is it that keeps me from God? If he

will give me strength in the time of need to give up Sydney submissively, should that trial come to me, why cannot I become a Christian now? I have prayed as earnestly as I know how that he will fill my heart with supreme love to him, but no answer seems to come. Since I have been here, one and another have united with the church and have found the peace for which I strive so vainly. Surely God must see how I long to come to him, if I could only see the way; and why does he not make it plain to me?

Sometimes I am tempted to give up the struggle, but I dare not. I have been received as a member of this church by sending in my certificate of confirmation, but I cannot go to the communion service until I feel differently. This evening I attended the preparatory lecture; and when I came home I wondered if I might not decide it all then. I knelt down and asked God to take me just as I was, with my heart full of fear and unbelief, and to fill me with his love. As far as I knew my own heart I was not holding back anything, but was willing to surrender anything I had to God; but I waited in vain for an answer. Perhaps God will not accept me now, when I have lived without him so long.

Formerly I flattered myself that I had a good excuse for living a life of unbelief. I argued

that the inconsistent lives of the professing Christians among whom I had been thrown would naturally keep me from having anything to do with religion; but I see now that I cannot make others answerable for my sin. If I had lived up to the light I had, God would have led me on. I would not acknowledge him in my life, nor even admit that I believed in him; and I have deserved that he should cast me off. It is very hard to struggle on in the darkness month after month, and find no light; but I will not give up. It may be that some day I may feel myself accepted and forgiven, and it would be worth a lifetime of pleading to find peace at last. I think I shall be happier than most people, if I ever find the light, for I have waited so long for it that it will seem doubly precious.

NOVEMBER 14. It is with a heart overflowing with love and gratitude to my Heavenly Father that I come to record his great mercy to me. His leading has been most wonderful, and I can hardly believe yet in my new peace and joy. Early last summer I had occasion to write a business letter to an editor, and was disappointed at receiving a letter from some one else who had taken his place, saying that it might be two or three weeks before the editor returned, but at that time my letter would be handed to him, and

I might expect to receive an answer. Inclosed in the letter was a leaflet, and without even glancing at the title I put it in one of the pigeon-holes of my secretary among some envelopes.

I had not seen it since and had entirely forgotten the circumstance. This morning I was very anxious to send a letter by the early mail, and as soon as I opened my eyes I sprang up, and taking some envelopes from my secretary, went into the study to address my letter and despatch it at once. The leaflet slipped to the floor from its hiding-place between the envelopes, and after I had dropped the letter down stairs and given directions to have it sent at once, I picked the leaflet up and glanced carelessly at the title. I had no intention of reading it, but something in the opening sentences attracted my attention, and standing there just where I was, in a patch of bright morning sunlight which streamed through the parted curtains, I read it all.

As I read it I felt a strange restfulness and peace stealing over me. It was as real a feeling as any merely physical sensation could be, and when I closed the leaflet I felt that I had come out from my darkness into a light that would never fade away. Everything was so clear to me then! I knew that I loved my Saviour supremely, and that he had washed me from my sins. I did not deserve the blessedness that I

experienced as I stood there, but I loved him all the more for his unmerited mercy. I had been thinking that I must love Sydney less before I could love God with all my heart; but it is not so. God has given him to me to love, and I do love him as dearly as ever; but I love God more. All my doubts and fears vanished as surely as the darkness of the night had vanished before the bright morning sunshine.

I do not think I shall ever forget those moments. The sunlight dancing on the carpet, the idle curiosity which prompted me to glance over the leaflet, the peace which flowed over me and diffused itself in my heart, all are imprinted on my memory too indelibly ever to grow dim with time. I knelt down and gave myself to God with a glad consecration of every power. It was a delight to kneel there with this sweet new assurance of acceptance. Not all the inconsistencies of a thousand Christians could cast a shadow upon the stainless Saviour, and he was to be my example, not any of his weak, erring followers; and having redeemed me, he was able to keep me to the end. When I went back into the bedroom, something in my face attracted Sydney's attention, and he looked at me inquiringly.

"Sydney, I am so happy!" I said. "It has come to me at last after all this weary waiting.

I can say truly now that I love God best of all, and I feel that he has heard and forgiven me."

"I am so glad, my precious wife," Sydney said tenderly, and I knew that I had his fullest sympathy in my joy. I told him the story of the little leaflet's mission, how it had been hidden away like a seed in the earth, waiting for God's time to bear fruit; and we both marvelled at the blessing that had been stored up for me through all these months.

I never imagined anything as restful and satisfying as this peace which verily "passeth all understanding;" how can I ever be grateful enough for it!

I shall treasure that little leaflet among my dearest earthly possessions, and I wish the sender could know its story, that he might be encouraged by the thought that the seed which he had scattered in unknown soil had been so richly blessed.

CHAPTER XII.

HOUSEKEEPING CARES.

NOVEMBER 15. This seems like a new world to me since yesterday morning; even the sunshine seems brighter. All Christians do not seem to find happiness in the knowledge of their forgiveness. Is it possible that this joy can grow as pale as any earthly happiness can in time? Can I ever grow careless and indifferent and forget to love my Saviour supremely? It is happiness to me to sit and think of the wonderful love that sought me when I was so far away from the kingdom and led me by the strength of my human love to the infinite love of God. If I had only known the happiness that there is in being a Christian, I should have come to Christ years and years ago. I could not have stayed away from Him. If I could only put my feelings into words and tell any one what a precious Friend he might have, I am sure I could bring some other soul to Him.

I wish God would give me something to do or to bear for Him. My life is such a selfish, useless one, and I long to spend and be spent in the Master's service. I grudge the time that

I spend in writing or in anything besides reading, prayer, and meditation. I can see how it must seem like a glorious thing to go into a convent, and shutting one's self away from the world, live only for God and in communion with him. Of course it would not do for every one to shut herself away from the active duties of life, for these must be attended to, but there is much to tempt one in a cloistered sisterhood.

I wish we lived somewhere else, where there was some active Christian work in which to engage. I have been wondering if there was not something for me to do here in this quiet little place, but there is absolutely nothing. My duties as wife are the only ones that fall to my lot. Perhaps God will send me something else to do for him in his own good time. There is so much work for him to be done in this great world that I cannot think he will let a willing worker sit with folded hands for lack of opportunity to labor. I will not ask for great things to do, for I feel that I am not worthy of that, but if only the humblest little opportunities may be opened to me I shall be so glad, for I do want to show my love by service.

NOVEMBER 17. My first Sunday since I have learned to prize that day as one for special communion with my Saviour. I enjoyed every word of the service, and the hymns seemed to

express my love and devotion better than any words of my own. I went to Sunday-school this afternoon, hoping there might be something there for me to do. That beautiful consecration hymn of Frances Ridley Havergal was given out and I resolved to make it my daily prayer, it so fully expressed the consecration that I want to make of all of myself.

When the children began to sing it, I discovered that it was a new hymn which they had not tried over before. It was not strange that they made some mistakes which might have once seemed ridiculous to me, if I had not heeded the words, but listened only to the music. I was too full of the spirit of the hymn to feel like smiling at the discords and the vain struggle to follow the organist, and I was surprised and a little indignant with a young lady in front of me who giggled and choked with laughter all through those matchless words. I am glad my self-righteous indignation speedily subsided. What right had I to sit so harshly in judgment upon her because she had done just what I should probably have done myself only a few days ago? It was not just to expect her to feel the beauty of the words as I did in the first glow of my love for Christ. I mean to watch myself carefully and guard against being an uncharitable Christian, for I cannot

imagine a more unbecoming trait in a follower of the meek and lowly Jesus, and I know how I have criticised this fault-finding spirit in others. There was no class for me, and I came home rather discouraged. How eagerly I shall watch every day for some opportunity of usefulness.

NOVEMBER 28. I wonder if there must always be a little thorn to keep people from being entirely happy in this world. I wish there was no such thing as money, or else that I had such a sufficiency of this world's goods that I could do everything myself without going to Sydney at all. I feel as if a spider was weaving its web about me. Each gossamer thread in itself is the veriest trifle, but gradually they are closing in around me, and I am afraid I shall be caught some day, like the luckless fly, in a net from which I cannot extricate myself. The trouble is this. When Aunt Penelope was here she had charge of the household expenses, and she estimated just the sum which should be sufficient for each week's outlay, and before she went away she told Sydney that it was an ample amount to allow me. She said I could easily keep within it if I was at all economical, and that if I knew I had to keep within those bounds it would teach me good management. My heart sank at the time, for I knew I could

not follow in Aunt Pen's footsteps, no matter how hard I might try. She is the most frugal and economical of housekeepers, and not a crumb is unutilized in the domestic economy. Everything is so nicely calculated that there is always just enough, and never at all too much, and it never pleases her to have any scraps left on our plates at the table which can possibly be eaten. Now I am positive I never shall learn to manage that way, and just between you and me, dear journal, I don't think I want to. I think it is painful to know that a sudden impulse of hospitality is perfectly impracticable, because there is never more than enough for the needs of our little family prepared. Nor do I like to have the table talk circle around the domestic's failings and extravagances. I do believe in a sunshiny, cheery home, where the spirit of criticism is banished and kindly feeling reigns, and I will not have a spirit of mutual antagonism spring up between myself and the girl so that we shall watch each other defiantly, lest we are imposed upon in some way.

I am human and have my failings, which I have no doubt my girl can see. Probably I am often inconsiderate and thoughtless, and do not make her life as easy as I might by a little appreciation of her best efforts. On the other hand Margaret is young and inexperienced, and

has not learned yet to try to make my interests hers, and sometimes makes unnecessary trouble by her carelessness. Neither mistress nor maid is perfect—indeed, we are far from it; but I do not want to assume an attitude of continual criticism, and make her think that I am always watching for her faults with keen eyes that are blind to her efforts to do well. I have a little theory of my own about the relations that should exist between us, and I mean to put it in practice.

I am worried over my housekeeping allowance though. On the subject of money there is a wall of reserve between us. I cannot bring myself to tell Sydney plainly and frankly that the allowance he makes me is not sufficient for the housekeeping expenses, and that I am steadily slipping behind week after week. I know it would be a great deal better for me to do so; it is the right way to do; but I shrink from it. In the first place, he will naturally compare my management to his aunt's, and I shall suffer by the contrast; and then I have the uncomfortable conviction that even if I did tell him what an ineffectual struggle I have to make both ends meet, he would say that his small income cannot afford a larger allowance, and will abide by his aunt's opinion that I will learn to manage in time if I am obliged to do it. Week

after week the greater part of my allowance goes to pay back bills, and so I am steadily slipping backward, and I cannot see where it is to stop.

I have been hoping that I could earn enough by writing to overtake these ruthless bills; but I have had to replenish my wardrobe, and I found that was not an altogether inexpensive performance, and since we have been housekeeping I have not had time to write as much as I could before. I have just a little hope that when I receive the next returns from my book I may be able to straighten up all these tangled affairs, and have a little bank account upon which to make inroads whenever I wish. If it is selling as well this year as it did last, I shall feel quite independently well off. The worst of all this is that it is making a little barrier between us, for I know there is one subject upon which we are not in sympathy, and one little trouble I cannot take to my husband. I wish we had started right. I am afraid this domestic money problem is one that will continually grow harder to solve.

DECEMBER 2. I feel as if I had found a treasure, and yet my grand discovery is only a poor old helpless woman who has been confined to bed for two years, and will probably never be anything but an invalid again. All this time I have been longing so for a lit-

tle work to do for the Master, and yet not the smallest opportunity has presented itself before. This morning an old carpenter who is feeble and rheumatic, and barely able to hobble around and do odd bits of work now and then, came to put up a small shelf in the kitchen for me. I had some illustrated religious papers which I wanted to dispose of in some way where they might be of use, and when he was ready to go I offered them to him.

"Oh, thank you," he said gratefully, as he took them, the wrinkled old face lighting up with pleasure. "These will be a rare comfort to my wife. She gets so tired lying by herself all day, for she is mostly alone when I am out."

"Is your wife sick?" I asked.

"Bless you, yes," the old man answered. "She's got such a misery in her back that she can't sit up, and her spine is all gone. She hasn't been out of bed for two years, and the doctor don't think she'll ever walk again."

"Who takes care of her?" I queried.

"Well, she has nobody but me, but I do the best I can for her. I fix her up before I come out mornings and put everything where she can reach it; and then I leave the house unlocked, so that if any neighbor has a mind to go and see her she can just walk right in."

"But how lonely it must be for her!" I exclaimed. "Does she lie there alone all day?"

"Yes'm, pretty generally," the old man answered. "At first the neighbors and church folks used to be good about dropping in to see her pretty often, but she's been sick so long that they are tired of it; and then she's been pretty short now and again when her pain has been bad, and so she has angered some folks. She's alone almost always now."

"Could I go and see her?" I asked, as eagerly as if I was craving a boon to myself. If I could only brighten some of those lonely hours I would not feel myself so utterly useless.

"She'd be glad to see you, ma'am. Just walk right in whenever you go, for if I a'n't at home there is no one to go to the door."

I was not long in availing myself of the permission, and this afternoon I made a delicate little pudding that I thought would tempt an invalid's appetite, and with a tiny bunch of violets made my way over to Mrs. Newman's. It seemed rather an intrusion to open the door and walk in unannounced; but knowing that knocking would be a useless ceremony, I passed through the little sitting-room into which the outside door opened, and tapped lightly at the door of the back room.

"Come in," was the response, and I opened

the door to find a small, neatly-kept room, with a large high bedstead drawn before the window. Everything was scrupulously clean, and a bright patchwork quilt covered the bed. A thin, pale-faced woman was leaning against the pillows, and the snowy frills of her old-fashioned night-cap were hardly whiter than her face. She had evidently been expecting me and seemed very much pleased at my call.

"When Andrew came home to dinner he told me you was coming," she said; "but I was afraid to let myself expect you for fear something might happen that you could n't come."

My heart ached as I listened to her story of loneliness and suffering. It seemed so hard that she should have to lie there alone with no one to sympathize with her pain, and with no care save that of her rheumatic husband.

"Andrew does the best he can for me," she said, "but it's a sore trial not to be able to get around and do for myself. If there's anything I can't abide, it's dirt; and though we have a young girl come in once a week to clean up and do the washing, I never feel satisfied that she has n't slighted the kitchen. I can see to this room, but what worries me most of all is the kitchen. I can't get out to take a look at it, and it's on my mind all the time."

To please her I looked out into the tiny kitchen, and assured her that it was as spotlessly clean as her bedroom, and she looked comforted at my assurance. I read to her from the well-worn copy of the Psalms in large print that lay beside her on the little stand, and then I came away, happy in the thought that by ministering to "one of the least of these" I was ministering to Christ. My impulse had been to promise to come over and see her every day, but I reflected that this might sometimes be impossible, and she would expect me and be disappointed, so I contented myself with promising her frequent visits. I do hope I shall be able to do a great deal to brighten that lonely sick-room, for without care and friends pain must indeed be hard to bear. It seems so strange that this opportunity was close at hand all the time only I did not know of it, and have been sighing for work. It may be that as the days come and go I shall see other paths of usefulness opening before me. I would so gladly be a useful Christian and prove my love by loyal, whole-hearted service.

CHAPTER XIII.

EFFORTS TO DO GOOD.

DECEMBER 25. Such a happy Christmas! I do not think that anything could add to my pleasure, and best of all is this deep peace that underlies all other emotions.

JANUARY 1. Another year has begun; and though I welcomed it gladly, I bade good-by to the dear old year reluctantly, it came to me so richly freighted with blessings, the full extent of which I did not dream in my most hopeful anticipations. Surely the coming year can hold no greater happiness than I have already experienced. It may be that it will bring me sorrow; but whether weal or woe, I am content, knowing that it all comes from a loving Father's hand.

JANUARY 9. Work has come to me, but it is work involving so much responsibility that I shrink from undertaking it. The class of large boys which might almost be called the young men's Bible class has been left without a teacher, and the superintendent has offered it to me. I asked for a few days in which to decide. I do not shrink from the work, but I

doubt my fitness for the position. The next two or three years will make such a difference in these boys' lives. They are in the transition period between boyhood and manhood just now, and if a strong influence for good can be exerted over them they may be of much use in the church and the world in a few years. They are boys, too, whose home influence is none of the best, and in some cases positively bad, so it becomes all the more necessary for their Sunday-school teacher to be an active power for good. If I only thought I could succeed I would gladly undertake this work; but I am afraid that by taking the class myself I may deprive them of a better teacher. I must ask for wisdom to decide aright, for I would not hold myself back from any service to which God calls me. I must remember he can make my feebleness strength.

JANUARY 13. To-night I am going to become acquainted with the members of my new class, for I have determined that I will try, at least, and prove my unfitness before I refuse this work. On looking over the class record I saw that fourteen names were inscribed there, while the average attendance is only five or six. Perhaps by having them all spend a social evening with me, I may revive their interest in their class and induce them to come more regularly.

I am a little afraid that I may not succeed in entertaining them, they are so different from any boys I have ever had anything to do with before. Some of them work in the factory here, and others go out with the fishermen, but they are all ignorant and neglected. Two or three of them can scarcely read, and some have heavy, dull faces, which I have never yet seen lighted up by a spark of intelligence. Their former teacher complained of their lack of interest and attention, and I think it will take a good deal of study and thought to find out the best way to make them take any intelligent interest in the lessons.

I have not had any experience as a Sunday-school teacher, but I should think that the first thing to do was to make them feel that I know each one, and have a friendly feeling for them outside of my relation to them as a teacher; and then perhaps, if they are interested in me in return, I can make this interest extend to the lesson.

I have sent each one an invitation to spend the evening with me, and I have no doubt that my note was the first that many of them had ever received in their lives. I do hope I can make them have a happy evening, for they seem to have so little of brightness or variety in their lives. I have made bountiful provision for their

entertainment in the way of cake and coffee, and I have made my pretty parlor and sitting-room look as inviting as possible, so I hope they will forget their shyness and really have a good time. It is seven o'clock, so they will soon begin to make their appearance if they come punctually. I must put you away for to-night, old journal, for I know I shall be too tired to write after my guests have departed.

JANUARY 14. I can write "success" as last night's record; for after the first stiffness and uncomfortable consciousness of a bewildering number of extremities which none of the boys knew how to dispose of without bestowing continual attention upon them, they all enjoyed themselves exceedingly. Sydney helped me to entertain them, and I think some of the boys were surprised to find how agreeable a minister could be. I fancy from some side remarks that I overheard that they imagined him continually preaching sermons in private life, and altogether comporting himself as if he was in the pulpit. I was pleased to see that all the boys had made some preparation for their visit, and had made themselves look as well as circumstances would permit.

When I looked at these rough, uncouth boys and remembered that each one was a casket in which was enshrined a precious soul, they grew

more attractive to me, and I longed to be able to win their hearts that I might lead them to Christ. They all seemed pleased with their cordial welcome and promised to be in their places in Sunday-school next Sunday. Now by every means in my power I must try to make the lesson so interesting that they will want to come again.

I need no longer complain that I have no work to do. My hands are filled to overflowing with these fourteen boys and my heart too will be full of them before many days, for I mean to bear them often to God in prayer, that he may do for them what I cannot. I think if any one should ask me what my highest ambition is now, I would answer, Bringing all these boys to Christ.

It is strange how one's thoughts and plans can be changed. Less than two years ago every ambition was centred in self and in winning laurels as a writer. Now that dream has but a small place in my life, and I am infinitely happier than in those old days of eager striving after the unattainable. If God will only use me in whatever manner he may see fit, I shall be content. I am so happy in my love for him. I hope it will always burn like an altar-fire within my heart.

JANUARY 19. My first day with my class. I

had prepared the lesson with special care, and gathered anecdotes and illustrations to make everything as interesting as I could. I have thought of the boys and prayed for them so many times this week that I really love them already. I was surprised to find out how very little they knew of the Bible, and I discovered that none of them are in the habit of looking at their lesson before they come to the school. After a hurried consultation with Sydney as he passed the class, I told them that I thought we needed more time to thoroughly study the lesson than the brief time allotted to us in Sunday-school, and I suggested that they should spend an evening with me every week so that we could have a better opportunity to talk it over together. They looked pleased at the suggestion and readily promised to come. I think that evening will do double duty, because it will give the boys a little time of wholesome innocent pleasure, and keep them from the street-corners and pool-rooms, besides teaching them.

I am glad Sydney was willing to sacrifice one of our pleasant evenings together, for I felt as if it would be such a good thing for the boys.

I went in after Sunday-school to see Mrs. Newman. She asked me to read a chapter about heaven, for she said she had passed a more restless night than usual and she wanted

to hear again about the home that she would reach when all her pain and loneliness was over. Her thin face was almost transfigured by the peaceful expression which the beautiful words brought there. I am so glad she has such comfort in believing. If she thought that the grave was the end of her life both now and for all eternity, I am sure she could not bear all her trials so patiently. She is so grateful for every little kindness I show her, and seems to look forward to my daily visit with so much eagerness, that I cannot make her realize that it is a great pleasure to me to minister in any way to her. I am afraid if I did not really enjoy it I might not go so often; but as it is, I always feel that it does me good to be with her, and that I gain in my spiritual life far more than I can give her in temporal matters.

JANUARY 23. It is so lovely to have Sydney's full sympathy in my interest in my boys. They were here to-night to study the lesson, and Sydney helped me prepare myself for it, and then when the hour had expired came down from his study and talked pleasantly with the boys, asking them questions about their work and their homes which made them feel that he was really interested in them. I am sure this evening in a pleasant home, where they feel that they are welcomed, must be a new and a helpful

experience to them, and perhaps some faint idea of what manhood might hold for them, if they made the best of themselves, stirred a sluggish ambition to new life as they listened admiringly to Sydney. I do hope I can hold the class together. If they were all Christians, what a power for good they would be among the young men in the town! I shall never be content until I win them all for Christ.

FEBRUARY 1. I have an idea—it is only a faint one just now, a mere glimmer in the recesses of my brain—but I think perhaps I can evolve from it a plan that can be put into practical working order. Last week I saw some of my boys coming out of the pool-room, and I fancied that their faces were flushed as if they had been drinking. On questioning them, I found that they are almost all of them in the habit of spending two or three evenings a week at this wretched resort.

“Well, we’ve no other place to go to,” expostulated one of the boys, when I told them how sorry I was to hear of their frequenting such a place. “We can’t stay at home evenings, for there isn’t anything to do, and cold nights we can’t stay out in the streets; so what are we going to do?”

This was the question I set myself to answer. Some respectable place for meeting the boys

must and should have, or I could not expect them to stay away from the pool-room, but where should it be? For two or three days I pondered the matter in vain, for I could not think of any plan.

I have a vision of a room fitted up specially for the boys, in a central part of the town, bright and warm, with an abundance of games and interesting books. I do not yet just see how this is to come about. I shall have to perfect my plan a little more before I can think of putting it into execution. Those boys are worth a great deal of thought and work, though I have found out that but few are of my opinion. My next-door neighbor told me quite frankly that she wouldn't have a lot of great rough boys trampling over her carpets for a good deal, and she evidently thinks that my interest in them is quite Quixotic. Well, I must admit that the boys themselves are not very interesting or lovable, but if one looks at them in the light of souls which are to be saved, they become very precious.

CHAPTER XIV.

TEMPORARY RELIEF.

FEBRUARY 4. This morning a letter came to me from my publisher, and I walked home as if I was treading on air, thinking joyfully that I would now be able to pay all those dreadful housekeeping bills that were steadily accumulating week after week. After these were paid I would put the balance of the money in bank and then use it a little at a time, so that I would not slip so far behind again. I was quite sure that the check was for a goodly amount, but I would not look at it until I was safe in my own room, lest I might be overwhelmed either with disappointment or delightful surprise. Of course there was a chance that the book might not have sold quite as well as it did last year, but on the other hand there was an equally great chance that the sales might have been much larger, and I could not help looking on this bright side.

Sydney was out, so as soon as I went up stairs I tore the envelope open with trembling fingers and unfolded the crisp pink slip that was hidden within the inclosed note. Surely I

could not have read the numbers aright; it could not be but twenty-seven dollars! There was some mistake which the note would explain. Every hope vanished as I glanced over the account and saw how few copies had been sold during the past year. The publisher's note said that he regretted to state that the sale of my book had about stopped, but I need not feel as if this denoted any great lack of merit in my work. On the contrary it was his usual experience with light novels; it was the exception, not the rule, when there was any demand for them after their first appearance. I was childish enough to vent my disappointment in tears, for such a decided falling off in the sale of the book I had not contemplated for a moment.

Now how should I ever settle those bills that were destroying my peace of mind? I have been trying so hard to be economical and keep our expenses within the lowest possible figures, but things will get broken and have to be replaced; we both have healthy, vigorous appetites which take kindly to bountiful meals; and Sydney has some favorite dishes for which he often asks, that I will not refuse him, though they add quite an item to the week's expenses. What shall I do? I would so gladly make up all the difference myself if I could, but I do not see how I ever can.

I have not been as unhappy before since we were married, if indeed I ever have been. I cannot see any prospect of extricating myself from my difficulties without going to Sydney for help, and I am sure he will be angry with me. I suppose he will think I have been deceiving him in hiding it from him so long, but indeed it was only because I thought I could straighten matters myself.

I do wish with all my heart that I had not tried to worry along by myself at the beginning, but had gone to him at once and explained that I could not do as his aunt did. I am getting more sensitive every day about asking him for money, and I sometimes wonder whether, if he forgot the housekeeping money, I should be able to summon up enough courage to remind him of it. This money question is the one discordant note in the harmony of our wedded life. I imagine that Sydney feels as if all the money belonged to him, and he must dole it out little by little without giving me any opportunity to use my discretion in the matter of its expenditure, and I have a sore feeling of being treated unjustly.

I will give myself three days' respite, and then if I cannot see any prospect of being able to pay these bills myself, I will tell Sydney all about it. He is so loving and forgiving about

other things that perhaps he will not be very angry with me about this. I love him so that I cannot bear to think of incurring his displeasure.

FEBRUARY 7. I told Sydney to-night that I could not keep within the housekeeping allowance, and asked him whether he could not give me more. I asked him as lovingly as I could, though I felt a constraint coming between us as soon as I spoke of money. It may be my imagination, but it does seem to me that as soon as money matters come up in the conversation Sydney's voice grows as cold and business-like as if he were talking to a perfect stranger.

"Aunt Penelope said that I had allowed quite a sufficient sum for all the housekeeping expenses, and we lived very comfortably upon that amount while she had charge of the house," he said, taking up his paper.

I felt a great lump rising in my throat, but I swallowed it back. How could I ever tell Sydney about those dreadful debts, when it annoyed him to merely ask for a more liberal allowance in the future?

"But I can't manage as Aunt Pen did," I said. "Besides, some things are more expensive now than they were when she was here in the fall; and then, too, some things have been broken. Indeed, Sydney, I have been trying

to do with just as little money as I could, but I can't possibly keep within my allowance. I am slipping behind all the time."

Sydney was interested enough to put down his paper now, and a little frown gathered between his eyebrows.

"Slipping behind? Do you mean that you have been going into debt contrary to my wishes, for you know how I feel about that?"

The lump would not be swallowed back this time and it brought tears with it. I began to cry miserably, thinking that surely Sydney's heart would be softened by my distress, and he would gather me up in his arms and be so loving that it would be easy to tell him all the rest. I would be willing to be scolded, for of course I had been doing wrong.

For the first time my tears fell unheeded, and Sydney sat in magisterial silence waiting for my answer.

"Yes," I sobbed, "but indeed I could n't help it, Sydney."

"I do not see why," answered Sydney. "I thought I put in your hands all that we could afford; and I told you I would rather go without things than go in debt for them; so I cannot see why you say you could not help it. I thought you would try to help me instead of adding to my cares. Whom do you owe?"

Whom did I not owe? That would not have been as hard a question to answer. If only Sydney would not look at me so sternly, I thought, sitting like a culprit before him with my face hidden in my handkerchief.

"The milkman," I began, but my voice faltered.

"How much do you owe him?" asked Sydney.

I named the sum meekly. It was small compared to the grocer's account, but Sydney seemed overwhelmed with indignant surprise, and it was evident that he did not dream that I was but beginning my confession.

I took his reproaches silently without attempting any excuse, wondering meanwhile how I should ever go on with my confession.

"I will give you the money to pay his bill in the morning," Sydney wound up at last, "and I never want this to happen again."

I felt like an arrant coward as I stood beside his desk nervously fingering the bills. I felt my courage oozing out at my finger-tips and I hoped he would ask me, "Do you owe anything else?" that I might have an opening to continue my confession. It was evident that Sydney thought that he knew the full depth of my iniquity, for he took up his paper again and vanished behind it without another word.

I could not tell him now. Somehow I would earn the money myself, for I could not endure to have him angry with me.

"Sydney," I began with a quivering voice, "please forgive me. You don't know how unhappy it makes me to have you vexed with me."

"It is evident that you do not care whether I have occasion to be annoyed or not," he answered. "It is anything but pleasant to learn that we are in debt when I have been supposing that we were paying all bills weekly."

For a moment I was angry, and my impulse was to turn proudly away. If Sydney did not care how unhappy I was, if he could withhold full and free forgiveness when I had sued for it, he might stay angry for a week if he chose. I should not humble myself to offer to make friends again. It was all his fault anyway. If he had given me a reasonably liberal allowance I should not have had any debts to confess; and anyway he should have been the one to ask my forgiveness for making me worry about something I could not help. This was my first impulse, but as I caught a glimpse of his brown hair over the top of the paper I knew that I could not bear to be unreconciled another moment. I pulled his paper aside and threw myself in his arms, sobbing.

"Sydney, Sydney, do forgive me and be loving to me," I entreated. "Indeed I have been so unhappy because I could not make the money last, and I have been punished two or three times over for doing wrong. Haven't you scolded me and made me miserable enough? Do forgive me now, for indeed I cannot bear to have you angry with me another moment. No matter what you should do to me, you would never have to ask my forgiveness but once. I could not be hard with you."

Sydney stroked my hair caressingly and tried to wipe away my tears.

"I did not mean to be hard on you, Phyllis," he said, "but I do think you gave me cause for annoyance. Now dry your eyes, and let me have my bright little wife again."

"And you forgive me?" I whispered.

"Yes, yes. We will be good friends again," and he kissed me. "Now we wont have any more trouble of this kind, will we?"

No, we would not, I reflected as I bathed my face, feeling as if we were not quite as fully reconciled as we usually are after our little disagreements. Sydney's manner hadn't been quite as loving, and I did not feel quite as convinced as I generally do that I only had been the one in fault.

There was a little gulf between us on the money question that our love was not strong enough to bridge over. One thing was certain, however: I would never ask Sydney for money again; and as for these debts, I would manage to settle them speedily somehow.

It makes me uncomfortable to know that I am keeping anything hidden from Sydney, but if he was so angry when I told him of but one debt, and that the smallest, would he ever have forgiven me if he had known all? I think he would not have been so hard with me if he had known how difficult it was for me to tell him, and if he had known how firmly I had expected to make up the deficiency myself. I am sure it was infinitely harder for me to ask him for the money than it was for him to give it, but it will be the last time that I ever trouble him that way.

FEBRUARY 12. I have solved my difficulty at last. I wrote to a friend who I knew could spare the money, and borrowed from her enough to pay all my bills and leave me a little over. She sent it at once, and bade me keep it as long as I needed it, as she was in no hurry for its repayment. I breathed more freely when the last bills were paid, and I was free from the haunting fear that they would be sent to Sydney and he would be doubly angry with me, for running into debt and then for concealing it.

I will save all I can earn by writing and lay it aside to repay this loan. I shall feel burdened until it is paid. I think when I am free from debt again that I will tell Sydney all about the trouble I have had, and come to some understanding on this money question. There will be nothing for him to be angry at, if I shall have made up all deficiencies myself, and then he may realize how much it has cost me to ask of his unwillingness. I do not want to think that he never will know all this, for I do not want to have any secrets from my beloved husband. He cannot love me as I do him, or he could not have been so cold to me when I was so unhappy, but I am content to give the most love, for he is more worthy of it than I am.

CHAPTER XV.

TRYING TO WIN SOULS.

MARCH 1. I have been too busy to write for some days, for I at last resolved my vague idea into a real tangible plan that could be put into execution.

I asked the boys if they would like a room fitted up for their use, where they could go to spend their evenings and invite their friends to join them, and they seemed delighted with the idea. I found there was a large room over a store that could be rented for a small sum, and the boys agreed to raise this amount among themselves, saying that it was not as much as they spent in the pool-room, so they would be able to pay it without feeling it any hardship.

We went down to look at the room one afternoon, and found it cheerless enough in appearance to discourage any one less enthusiastic than I was. The walls wanted papering sadly, the floor was rough and uneven, and the paint was worn off entirely in places, and here and there about the doors and windows it had been defaced by cuts from knives in idle hands. Everything was to be done before it could be

made as attractive as I meant it should be for my boys.

If we had had enough money at our disposal, it would not have been a very hard thing to transform the room; but as ingenuity had to supply the place of funds, it was a more difficult matter. The boys themselves agreed to paper the room, and the small amount needed to purchase a cheap paper was readily contributed. Two or three of the boys knew something about papering, and they volunteered to do their best, while some of the others said they would paint the floor and woodwork. For my share of the work, I promised to see if I could not solicit contributions in the way of chairs and other necessary articles of furniture. I had unlimited faith in my persuasive powers and in the miscellaneous contents of several old attics of which I had heard, and I felt sure that I could succeed in getting what we needed for the room. It took several days of hard work to do this, but I succeeded even beyond my hopes. At first I was rather discouraged, every one was so sure that she had not anything that would answer at all; but it always ended in my being invited to walk up and see for myself whether there was anything that could possibly be of service.

Many a treasure I found that had been laid away for years awaiting a chance of further

usefulness. Old curtains, whose raggedness had banished them from the windows they once had graced, were not wholly past possibilities of repairing, and some gay colored cretonne I eagerly seized upon for lambrequins, which would serve the double purpose of making the room bright and helping to conceal the deficiencies of the curtain. A stove was discovered in the cobwebby recesses of one garret, and a large round table in another. Almost every one had a chair to contribute, and although no two were alike in appearance or state of repair, I knew the boys would not be disposed to be critical.

It was a delight to me to arrange the room after the boys had collected the various articles. It had been suggested that we might make a rug that would serve for comfort and warmth, as well as brightness, by sewing together odds and ends of carpets that had been thrown aside as being too small to be used. Some of the ladies had helped with this rather hard task, and the result was really quite creditable and a great improvement to the bare, uneven boards, much as they had been benefited by the coat of paint the boys had bestowed upon them.

The walls looked very attractive with their coat of new paper, which was very well put on, considering the inexperience of the youthful workmen. Some pictures were hung up, and if

some of them lacked frames, and all were a little old-fashioned, there was no one to find any fault. In one corner was fastened a large bunch of velvety brown cat-tails and feathery grasses, and an old clock which I would have welcomed as a gift for my own use, it was so quaint and old-fashioned, ticked solemnly in another. In the centre of the bright rug stood a large table, covered with a green cloth, upon which lay some tempting illustrated papers which were to be a weekly addition to the room. Enough chairs for the boys and any guests they might invite were scattered about the room, and a hanging-shelf held several games. Several bracket-lamps were fastened to the walls and lighted every corner, and the lace curtains looped back from the window, with the gay cretonne lambrequins falling over them, gave a homelike air to the whole.

The boys were delighted with the result, and I was equally so; for we had certainly had most unpromising materials to begin with. The boys were very ready to promise that no cards, liquor, or tobacco should be brought into their room, and they agreed that whoever came in to spend an evening with them should assent to the same conditions. I need not say that by this time I know all the boys well, and I am sure that they each feel that they have a friend in me as well as a teacher, and that I am always as

interested in them and in their welfare as I am during the brief hour that we spend together in Sunday-school. They have been attending very regularly, and I am proud of my large circle of tall boys who take so much interest in the lesson, which we still carefully study together during the week. I am so glad I have been able to help them with this room.

I am afraid I have let my interest in it lead me into a little extravagance. I did not see where the games, the illustrated papers and magazines, and the lamps were to come from, and they were so very necessary for the boys' comfort and enjoyment that I could not resist getting them myself. I knew all the time that I could not afford it, but I determined to deny myself something to make up for it. There was no unselfishness about my doing this, because it was something that gave me more pleasure and gratification than any other self-indulgence could have done. I am sorry to confess that I rarely am unselfish. It is a joy to me to carry out any generous impulse, and of course it is not self-denying at all to gratify myself. I am curious to know sometimes whether I would give if an opportunity came which would cost me a real effort. I hope I would, but I cannot be sure of myself until I am tested.

MARCH 9. I am half frightened at some-

thing that I did to-day, and yet I do not regret it, for I felt as if it was something that the Lord had given me to do for him. There is quite a peculiar character in town, a dressmaker, who attends our church. She has a son and a daughter, who attend churches of two other denominations. Their mother gives as a reason for separating them in this way, that she receives custom equally from the members of the three churches, and so it is only right to attend them all. She attends our church simply by way of returning the courtesies which some of our members have shown her in the way of custom.

No one could be kinder-hearted than Mrs. Dearing, and yet surely no one ever had blunter or more disagreeable ways. She will do a real kindness for some one, and then accompany her generous deed with a remark so utterly unfeeling that all her kindness will be forgotten in the resentment that her remark causes. For professing Christians she has a most profound contempt, and she delights in dragging some inconsistency of a church member to light and holding it up for public criticism. Her keen eyes detect every fault, and her sharp tongue is merciless in rebuke.

When I am with her she enjoys criticising the prayer-meetings and other services of the church.

"I don't wonder more people don't go to prayer-meeting," she began once, when she had me fairly in her hands and was at work fitting a dress, so that I could not hope to escape for some time. "My sakes! such cold, dreary meetings as they are—enough to put you to sleep, not to say freeze you."

"I did not know you ever went to prayer-meeting," I answered.

"Yes, I went once, but you'll never catch me there again. Long-winded prayers about nothing in particular, the worst singing I ever heard anywhere, and I don't know but the remarks were the worst of all."

I winced a little, partly at this criticism of the remarks which I supposed Sydney had made, and partly because her cold scissors were snipping around my neck in an alarming way.

"It was before Mr. Landreth came," she continued presently, "but I have n't heard that they are any better or attended any more lately. Well, it's all a farce anyway, and those that cant the most are the greatest humbugs."

I was decidedly in awe of Mrs. Dearing always, and whenever I attempted to parry any of her attacks I invariably got the worst of it, for her bluntness of speech and sharp tongue would lead her to say many things that unfortunately could neither be wholly denied nor extenuated.



E.W.HENRY DEL.

Last Sunday evening at the close of the church service we had a short consecration service, at which each member promised that during the next week he would say some word to lead a friend to Christ. I had been wondering to whom I could find courage to speak, when I thought of Mrs. Dearing. At first it seemed wholly impracticable and useless to run the risk of incurring her ridicule and sarcasm, when she was so hopelessly hardened against religion. I put her out of my mind and began to search for some one else, but even when I prayed for wisdom to direct me, Mrs. Dearing returned to my mind persistently again and again. Perhaps if she knew of the peace and joy of finding Christ, she might forget all these inconsistencies in others which were such stumbling-blocks in her way, and learn to love him as I had done. I had once believed that religion was all a pretence, but I had learned its reality by my own experience. It might be that the same awakening would come to her if some one only had courage enough to wisely and kindly speak to her.

It was quite possible that it had never been brought to her personal attention before, as a matter in which she was concerned individually without any regard to any one else. Did God mean me to be his ambassador? I shrank from

the thought of speaking to this hard, blunt woman about the things which were so sacred and dear to me ; but much though the effort might cost, I would not refuse to speak. God has been so good to me that any duty he places before me I will perform willingly and lovingly for him.

With an earnest prayer for wisdom and guidance I put on my hat and went down to Mrs. Dearing's, wishing that my errand had been accomplished and I was safely at home again. She was in one of her hardest, most sarcastic moods, and like a miserable coward I made some weak excuse for my coming and left without uttering the message I had come to bring.

I made one faint effort as I stood in the doorway, but she had not heard me speak and aimed a final shaft at some one in our church who was under her displeasure ; so I left in silence, mourning over my cowardice.

When I came home and had regained the refuge of my own room, tears came fast. What was my love worth, if I could not give the message God had put into my heart for fear of a rebuff or sarcastic speech ? Unpromising as Mrs. Dearing's mood was, could I not have trusted the promise, "God's words shall not return unto him void," and believed that he would use my weak words spoken for him ? Oh,

lack of faith and of love, and now I had lost my opportunity !

A thought came to me in my despondency. Why not write what I had intended to say? Sitting down at my desk I took up my pen, pausing first to ask that every word might be directed by God, and wrote a note to Mrs. Dearing. I told her frankly what my real errand had been that morning, and how I had yielded to timidity and come away in silence. Then I tried to tell her what a friend I had found in Jesus, and how much I wanted her to share my new peace and joy. I confessed that it had not been so very long ago that I too had let other people's inconsistencies keep me away from Christ and had believed that there was nothing real in religion, but that now it was the chief happiness in my life, as I knew it would be to her if she would only open her heart to the Saviour. I begged her lovingly and earnestly to think about the love that was waiting patiently for her acceptance, and told her that it was not because I considered myself any better than she was that I spoke of this to her, but because I had found how precious Christ was and I wanted her to love him too.

It was a poor weak appeal, and two or three times tears blotted the page. It seemed hardly worth sending, yet I put the matter in my

Father's hands and left him to wing the arrow so it might find an entrance to her heart. I sent it down to her house by her son, who was passing the door, and all day long I have been alternately glad and sorry that I wrote. She is a quick-tempered woman, and she may resent my note as "preaching" and be furiously angry at me, and I tremble to think of the vials of her wrath being poured out in sarcasm upon my luckless head. Perhaps she will ridicule my words and show the note to others to laugh over, and I am afraid I dread ridicule more than anger; but I will try to leave the matter in God's hands where I placed it and not worry about the result. It is enough for me if God will permit me the privilege of carrying the message of His love and pardon. How much harder it would be if the injunction "See thou tell no man" had been laid upon me, and my lips were sealed so I could not tell of the blessedness which has crowned my life with its highest joy.

MARCH 20. To-day I saw Mrs. Dearing for the first time since I sent my note, and I have been coward enough to be glad that I have not been thrown in contact with her.

She did not acknowledge my note in any way, though at the conclusion I had asked her to send me just a line to assure me that she

was not angry with me. I thought that perhaps Archie had forgotten to give it to his mother; but when I saw him in Sunday-school the following Sunday and asked him, he said he had given it to her as soon as he went home. She did not come to church last Sunday, and I trembled lest I might have driven her away by some lack of tact.

This evening she was in church for the first time since my note, but when we came near each other in passing down the aisle she did not make any allusion to it, only shook hands with me as usual, with some remark about the difficulty she found in keeping awake in church at night. Her manner was neither kinder nor colder than usual, so I do not know what she thought of my note. I should never dare refer to it, so perhaps it is seed dropped by the way-side that will never bring forth ever so small a harvest. God knows. I will leave it all in His wise hands, but every day I mean to pray earnestly for Mrs. Dearing, and it may be that some day God will grant me the inestimable boon of permitting me to bring this soul to Him.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CALL TO SELF-DENIAL.

APRIL 4. Our wedding day. What a happy year this first year of our wedded life has been! We have grown nearer together and learned to understand as well as to love one another better. I think sometimes that our life is an almost ideally happy one. It is only once in a great while that there is a "rift within the lute," but it is not long before the harmony is restored, for we love each other too dearly to trifle with one another's feelings.

I have to watch my heart very carefully lest I let my love for Sydney usurp the place that love for God should have. I am distressed to find that every now and then I grow cold and indifferent in my religious life, reading the Bible is an irksome duty, and prayer does not seem the privilege that it really is. When I realize that my love is growing cold I am frightened at the thought of my ingratitude and sin. It seems to me as if my very happiness was a temptation to indifference instead of making my love deeper and more grateful. As soon as I find myself growing contented

with God's gifts and forgetting the Giver, I pray and pray for new love until I find my heart burning within me again.

One would suppose that my happy life would make me love God instinctively out of overflowing gratitude for all his goodness. It is discouraging to find how poor a thing my love is and how little worthy of his acceptance. I do not want to wait until trouble drives me to him for a refuge, and I will not let myself grow cold and unloving, though I have to pray continually that my love may be rekindled from above. Each year comes to me so bountifully laden with blessings that my warmest, most adoring love is all too inadequate a return.

APRIL 15. I have wondered whether I could be unselfish if I was called upon to give up something that I really prized and wanted to keep for myself. The test has come; I have been weighed in the balances and found sadly wanting. I try to comfort myself by thinking that if it was anything else in the world I could resign it willingly, but I suppose I am equally selfish about a great many things. I mean to conquer my selfishness. I have fully determined upon that already, but it is costing me very dearly.

We received news this morning of Linda's engagement. She is to be married early in

September to an army officer, who will take her away at once to Montana, where he has been ordered. Of course it is out of the question for Aunt Penelope to accompany Linda there; and I think, too, that neither she nor her husband desire any company during the first of their married life, even if it were a possible thing. Misfortunes never come singly, the old proverb says, and in this case it has been true. Aunt Penelope is very fond of her own home, and I think she would rather have stayed in it alone than leave it, had she not been unfortunate enough a few months ago to lose the greater part of her income by a sudden depreciation in the value of some real estate in which her money was invested.

Of course there is but one thing to do: she must be invited to share our home. It is only right, after she denied herself to educate Sydney and has been to him the most devoted of mothers, loving him quite as dearly as if he had really been her son instead of her nephew; but oh, it is so hard to think of sharing with her my precious home! It could never be the same place with any one else here. I am selfish too, I know, but I do not want to share Sydney with any one else. He has been very kind about the matter. When I have pored over "Stepping Heavenward" I have always pitied poor Katy

so, because her husband thrust his relatives into her home without giving her an opportunity to make the sacrifice a free-will one. I never doubted but that she was sweet and unselfish enough to have extended a cordial welcome to them if she had only been given the chance.

Sydney has not even suggested that we should ask Aunt Penelope here, but when he read me the letters I knew as well as he did that there was nothing else to be done. I do love him, though, for giving me time to think about it and letting me make the proposal first. When I bring myself to speak of it, I shall have conquered my old selfish nature enough to be really cordial in my invitation to Aunt Pen, and that I know will please Sydney. He is so good to me that I ought to be willing to make any sacrifice for him.

I am quite disgusted with my selfishness, for though I have been reasoning and arguing with myself all the evening, I feel as bitterly rebellious as ever. I shall have to fight it out on my knees, for I can never conquer in my own strength. It ought to help me to remember that I am doing this for God as well as for my dear husband. This is part of God's plan for my life, and I ought to yield my own plans cheerfully. Can I not make this small return for all his goodness to me, for the love which

has guided me through all my life, even when I was unconscious of it?

Poor old Aunt Penelope! I am ashamed to think how I grudge her this little bit of sunshine in her last years. She idolizes Sydney so that she is perfectly happy when she is near him, and though she is not demonstrative in her affection, and never kisses or caresses him, yet she is always devising little comforts for him. If any one could "be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease," I am sure she would contrive to have Sydney borne thus luxuriously away. When I know how happy it would make her to share his home, I realize how contemptibly selfish I am. I am young and may have a long lifetime before me in which to enjoy being with my precious husband. Aunt Pen is sixty years old, and so at the most it would be but giving up my own happiness for a few short years. Her devotion to him deserves this return, for if she had been his mother, it would have been natural to expect of her this self-sacrificing devotion; but it was unusual love for an aunt to display, and no doubt many of her plans for her own life had to be ruthlessly pushed aside when she took her sister's children into her home. Can I not repay her for her goodness to Sydney by putting aside my plans now? If I am loving and patient, I am sure I

can win her love in return, and where there is love, a home can never be unhappy. Yes, I will ask her to come, for her own sake, for Sydney's sake, and for the sake of Christ who "pleased not himself."

APRIL 16. At last I so wholly conquered myself last night that from the depths of my heart I could bid Aunt Penelope welcome. When Sydney came home from some pastoral calls I went up in the study, and nestling close to him, said,

"May I write and ask Aunt Penelope to make her home with us, Sydney? I am sure she would enjoy it here."

The sudden expression of relief and pleasure that lighted up Sydney's face was enough in itself to repay me for the effort the words had cost me.

"I would not have suggested it first, Phyllis," he said, "but I could not see what else was to be done. It will be very hard for you, darling; do you realize that? Aunt Penelope is so devoted to me that she cannot see a flaw or fault in me, and you know she is very quick to criticise and comment upon failings in any one else. You will have a great deal of fault-finding to bear, and it will only make matters worse for you if I interfere in any way with what she may say. I know you are a brave, unselfish little

woman, but I want you to count the cost beforehand."

"But what else is there to do, Sydney?" I asked rather wistfully, almost hoping that he might have some plan by which we could provide for Aunt Penelope without taking her into our home.

"That is just the trouble," Sydney responded. "There does not seem to be any other alternative, for it does not seem right, after all she has done for me, that my home should be closed against her now. Still your happiness is my first consideration of course; and if you feel that you cannot endure the discomfort that you may be called upon to experience, we must not ask Aunt Pen to come.

"I appreciate your unselfishness in suggesting it, darling, for I know how you enjoy being mistress of this little home. When Aunt Pen comes she will insist upon advising you about every little household matter, and you will be brave if you do not have to abdicate altogether. Still it may be only for a few years, and if it will not be altogether unendurable to you, I should be glad to make this return for all the kindness she has shown me. All that grieves me is that the unpleasantness will all fall upon your shoulders and I can bear so little of it for you."

"I will not be unhappy over it," I said com-

fortingly. "Besides, Sydney, you know I love you well enough to be glad to have you have things just as you like them, and I am willing to give up to you any time, so Aunt Pen and I will certainly agree about that. I am not jealous either—at least not much—and I will let her have you all to herself ever so often, and that will make her like me. I think we shall be good friends, although of course I cannot hope to have her love me as she loves you and Linda; it would be unreasonable to expect that. I won't say that I think we can be quite as happy as when we are here by ourselves, but it will be a pleasure to know that we are making Aunt Pen happy, and that will make up for a good deal. I will write to her and tell her that we shall be glad to have her come and make her home with us, for I can truthfully say that, Sydney, when I think of all she has done for you."

I had my reward then in Sydney's caresses and words of loving praise, and after I had written an affectionate note to Aunt Pen, urging her to make her plans to come as soon as Linda was married, my heart felt much lighter than I would have thought possible.

Perhaps it will not be so great a trial as I cannot help anticipating it will be, and at any rate there are several intervening months in which to be perfectly happy. Even if it is very

hard to be found fault with and criticised, I could bear it all for Sydney's sake, and he will love me all the more when he sees how much I would do for him. Aunt Penelope, too, will appreciate my invitation, and it will cheer her lonely old heart to think that she has a home with Sydney awaiting her.

I wish it had not cost me such an effort to ask her; I should like to think that I had been unselfish enough to put aside my own feelings willingly and cheerfully. I am always learning discouraging things about myself, and sometimes I wonder if I really am a Christian at all.

CHAPTER XVII.

JOY OVER A SOUL WON.

JULY 3. I have been too busy to write here for some time, and nothing has occurred that seemed worthy of record, but to-night I want to tell you, dear old journal, how good God has been to me in accepting and blessing my feeble effort to lead another to him.

I have never ceased praying for Mrs. Dearing since the day I sent her that note, but I was beginning to fear that no answer would ever be vouchsafed me. If there was any change at all to be noticed in Mrs. Dearing, it was that she talked more than ever about her unbelief in and contempt for religion and came less frequently to church. She had never alluded to my note, but seemed to take delight in talking about people that set themselves up for saints because they belonged to the church, and judged everybody else that did n't follow in their ways. Her remarks were very hard to bear sometimes.

One day Sydney and I received invitations to a large party that was to be given in town, and knowing that the chief entertainment of

the evening was to be dancing, we declined. Mrs. Dearing asked me if we were going, and when I said "No," giving our reasons, she said contemptuously,

"Well, if I was a minister and was so afraid of my religion that I had to keep it shut up at home and in the church, I'd go into some other business. Is he afraid he couldn't keep from dancing if he went, or what is the matter with him? I haven't much opinion of a religion that dare n't be exposed to temptation."

I was thoroughly angry at the way she spoke of Sydney, and my face flushed hotly. The two young girls who sewed for her were listening, apparently much amused at her outspoken criticism of the minister.

"Mrs. Dearing," I said, trying to steady my voice, "I can hardly believe that you so little understand Mr. Landreth's motives in not attending a ball as to really think he does not dare expose himself to any temptation. I should think, if you had any sense of the fitness of things, you would see that the injury would be not to himself, but to his influence over others, especially the young whom he is trying to reach. Even if you are inclined to put such an absurd construction upon our actions, it is in the poorest taste to criticise my husband to me in this way. Perhaps you do not know

any better, but it is a lesson you would do well to learn for the future."

I left the house without waiting for any response and walked rapidly homeward, so angry at Mrs. Dearing that I almost felt as if I did not care whether she ever became a Christian or not. Suddenly my angry thoughts of her turned into self-accusing ones. Had I spoken as a Christian should? Had I spoken "the truth in love" or in bitterness? True, she had spoken rudely and unkindly, but she did not profess to be a follower of the meek and lowly Jesus, while she had good reason for expecting me to control my temper.

Perhaps my hasty words and evident ill-temper would drive her farther than ever away from the Saviour to whom I had been praying that she might be brought.

Obeying my impulses, I retraced my steps, and tapping at the door entered her sewing-room.

"Mrs. Dearing, I have come back to beg your pardon for speaking so hastily," I said. "I ought not to have lost my temper and I am sorry."

"I didn't care whether you was mad or not," was the acceptance of my apology. "I always speak my mind, and other folks can do the same if they want to."

I was not sure that I had smoothed her ruffled feelings by my apology, but at any rate I had done right, and I went home feeling better than if my angry words had been my last ones.

Two nights after this I was surprised to see Mrs. Dearing enter the prayer-meeting. I fancied that there was an unusually serious expression upon her face, and I could not be sure that it was only my imagination. I prayed for her with renewed earnestness, hoping that the Spirit might touch her heart in that hour so that she could not be deaf to His pleadings.

I was disappointed, when I tried to reach her after the service to greet her, to hear her voice laughing and talking as if serious impressions were the farthest from her thoughts of anything.

The next evening I was surprised at receiving a call from her. I had been suffering from one of my nervous headaches all day, and though it had passed away, I was still feeling weak and languid. I was lying on the sofa in our pleasant sitting-room, and Mrs. Dearing would not let me rise, but sat beside me and chatted in one of her pleasantest moods. My heart was full of her, and I wondered whether it might not be that some faint desire to know Christ was awakening within her. I longed to speak to her about it, but even to Sydney it is

hard to talk freely and unreservedly upon this subject, and I was afraid besides that a word at the wrong time would do more harm than good. Sydney walked home with her, and when he returned I told him about my note to her so long ago and of my constant prayers for her, asking him if he thought she was at all softened or touched.

"I am afraid not, darling," he answered. "As soon as we left the house she launched out into one of her usual tirades of abuse about church members, and I had to decidedly refuse to listen to her before I could check her. It would be a wonderful work of grace if God's love should force its entrance into her heart. She seems so completely hardened that I must confess she discourages me."

The next morning Archie came up to the house while we were still at the breakfast-table.

"Mrs. Landreth, mother wants to know if you would come right down and see her. She's sick or something, for she never went to bed all night; and she's been crying like anything."

Archie was so evidently anxious about his mother that I went to Mrs. Dearing's at once.

I was ushered up to her room, and opening the door found her sitting upon the foot of the bed, which had evidently not been slept in, her face flushed and swollen with weeping.

"Oh, I am so miserable!" she exclaimed as I entered the room. "I sent for you to tell me what to do, for it's all your fault. I should never have thought about such things if it hadn't been for you. I don't know why I don't hate you for making me so wretched, but I suppose you meant it for the best. Oh, what shall I do?"

"What is the matter, Mrs. Dearing?" I asked, thinking that she must be suffering so from some cause that she did not know what she was saying, for how could I have been the cause of her violent distress?

"Oh, it's a terrible thing to feel that you've been such an awful sinner that you want to hide anywhere away from God. I never thought I was bad. I've always been hard-working and honest and helped people that were in trouble, and when I've compared myself with church members it always seemed to me that I was better than they were, for all they professed so much. But somehow I can't feel that way now. I can only think that I'm fit neither to live nor to die, and I dare n't ask God to have mercy on me. If I dared to die, I believe I would rather kill myself than spend another night like last night. Oh, I am so miserable! If I could only feel as happy and contented with myself as I did a while ago."

"Don't wish that," I exclaimed earnestly. "Don't wish you could free yourself from this burden, but just take it to God, and he will lift it from you and give you such peace that you will feel that it is payment a hundred-fold for all that you are suffering now. It is because he loves you and wants to bring you to Himself that He has sent his Spirit to you."

"I dare not pray," she answered. "Do you remember the other night in prayer-meeting Mr. Landreth was telling about that poor woman who came up behind Jesus and touched the hem of His garment? Well, I feel as if I would like to have been that woman. I a'n't fit to call to Him nor ask Him to do anything for me; but if I could just creep up somehow and touch the hem of His garment, it is all I could ask.

"I've been trying to fight this off for days, but it seemed as if I could n't think of anything else. I could n't stay away when I heard the bell ringing for prayer-meeting, and yet I would n't own up to myself that I wanted to go. I just sat and hardened myself all the time and would n't let myself feel solemn. I went up to see you half hoping you'd say something more to me, and I was mad that you did n't, though I'd have snapped at you if you had, I dare say. I said to myself that you did n't really care, no-

body cared, whether I was saved or not, and all the way home I talked as ugly as I could to Mr. Landreth, so that he would n't have any notion how I was feeling.

"I would n't give up to it as long as I could possibly hold out, but last night I could n't get away from myself anyway. I just had to face it all, and there was no use trying to tell myself it was all a sham anyhow, for I *knew* it was n't. It just seemed as if there was n't anybody but God and me in the world, and I had to answer for myself. I've been ugly to Mr. Landreth so often that I don't know whether he would come and see me now or not. I don't deserve it, I know, but if he would only come and pray for me! He's a good man, and the Lord would hear him when He would n't listen to me."

I assured her that Sydney would willingly and gladly come, and hurried home to send him to her. He hastened away on his mission of comfort, while I knelt down and poured out my heart for Mrs. Dearing, thanking God that he had so moved that heart which had seemed steeled against every good influence, and praying that she might soon find the peace which a sense of forgiven sin brings.

It was nearly three hours before Sydney returned.

"How does Mrs. Dearing feel now?" I inquired eagerly. "Is she happier?"

Sydney shook his head.

"No, she is so oppressed with the conviction of her sinfulness and need of forgiveness that I cannot bring her to see that she has only to lay her burden at the foot of the cross to be free. Of one thing I am sure however: she cannot stifle the voice of the Spirit; it is speaking to her too loudly; and when peace does come, it will be a lasting peace instead of a false contentment. I am sorry for her, and yet I am very glad that she has awakened to a sense of her need of a Saviour. I do not think I ever quite as fully realized the power of the Spirit as when I saw her in such agony of mind over a life which she has always considered irreproachable before. We must pray for her, darling, that light may soon come to her."

In the afternoon I had hoped to go down and see Mrs. Dearing again, that she might know my thoughts, sympathies, and prayers were with her, but friends came, so I did not have an opportunity.

Sydney went to see her again in the evening, but came back to say she was still struggling with this overwhelming sense of sin, and could not seem to understand how easy a thing it was to carry her burdens to Christ.

Our united prayers were offered very earnestly that night that light might come to her before another morning dawned.

Sydney went to her as soon as we were through breakfast, and I thought much of her while he was gone.

As soon as he entered the room on his return I knew by the expression of his face that all was well with her.

"She has found peace at last," he said as he met my inquiring gaze. "She says she spent the night upon her knees, wrestling in prayer, discouraged, yet not daring to give up. The morning broke before she felt that God had heard and answered her prayers; but at last the load was lifted from her heart, and she knew that though her sins had been many, they were all forgiven her. It is one of the most thorough, heart-searching conversions I have ever heard of. Her love and gratitude are in proportion to her sense of sin, and she is very happy in her new joy. She called the children into the room, and it was very touching to hear her confess to them that she had been sinning all these years, but that now she had found and loved her Saviour, and wanted to lead them to love him too."

"What did the children say?" I asked.

"Ella looked awed, but Archie's face grew radiant, and he threw his arms about her neck.

"‘I’m so glad, mother,’ he said impulsively. ‘I mean to be a better boy now, if you are going to be better too.’

“Then she asked me to consecrate her and her children to the Lord and establish at once the family altar, which she meant should never be broken down. God has been very good to you, my dear little wife, to let you be the human instrument in bringing about this great change.”

“Had my note anything to do with it?” I asked, wondering whether the seed sown in such weakness could indeed have brought forth such a harvest.

“Yes, she says the first time she ever realized that religion might be anything to her was when she got your note. She confesses that she was angry at you when she received it, and thrust it back in its envelope with the intention of returning it to you; but something in the affectionate manner in which your appeal was written dissuaded her from doing this. Then her impulse was to burn it or tear it up, but something prevented her from doing it. She threw it into her bureau-drawer, and it lay there for two or three weeks, but every time she went to the drawer she saw it, and it set her thoughts to work. At last she could not bear to have it there as a constant reminder to her

of a subject she wanted to banish from her thoughts, so she crumpled it up and threw it into her piece-bag. It still seemed to pursue her, for it was always in her way whenever she had occasion to go to this bag. In spite of herself she began to think, and the more she hardened her heart, the more persistent became this voice which urged her to settle this matter of her soul's salvation.

"Much of the bitterness with which she has spoken of religious matters has been only assumed to hide her real feelings. She wanted me to tell you how she thanked you, and how sorry she is for having wounded your feelings so many times. I could not have imagined a more altered woman. There is a gentleness and humility about her manner that is new and touching. I cannot rejoice enough over the change."

I have thought many times that I have reached the height of human happiness, that I had attained to one of those few supreme moments which are the heights in one's life, but surely there can be no happiness and blessedness equal to the knowledge that one has brought a soul to Christ.

I hardly think the joy that comes with one's own sense of reconciliation to Christ can be deeper and sweeter than this. I did not de-

serve such a rich reward for my feeble effort. I had well nigh lacked faith and love enough to conquer self and speak at all; and yet the promise, "God's word shall not return unto him void," had been grandly verified, and the word so feebly spoken had returned unto him with this abundant harvest. I have filled three large pages, dear journal, but surely I shall never have a greater joy than this to record, and I never want to forget this blessedness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CHANGE OF ADMINISTRATION.

SEPTEMBER 3. Somehow there always seem to be long lapses between the dates in this journal, notwithstanding my resolution to write at least once or twice a week. It is almost two months since I wrote last. We have been away for our summer vacation and have come home to spend the week before the wedding in making preparations for Aunt Penelope's coming.

In the first place I have been having a most thorough house-cleaning, that Aunt Pen may not have any reason to criticise the appearance of the house. Every nook in every closet has been zealously scrubbed, and even my scrap-bag has been looked over. There have been some changes to make in the rooms too. There are but two rooms on our second floor, the room Sydney uses as his study and our large bedroom opening from it. I am so selfish that I have a little pang over every self-renunciation. Of course it will not do for poor Aunt Pen to climb to the third story to her room, so I must give her our bedroom. I do not mind the extra flight of stairs for myself at all, but I do

mind the very considerable separation from Sydney.

I know from past experience that I shall not be allowed to take my writing into Sydney's study any more, and it would mean continual disagreement with Aunt Pen if I insisted upon it against her plainly expressed wishes.

If I could only be as near him as our room I would not mind so much, but I shall feel so far away from him up stairs; and in the evening, when he is busy with his writing, I cannot nestle down on my pillow where I can hear the scratch of his busy pen.

I am just going to shake myself every time I catch myself mourning over any little inconvenience that Aunt Pen will cause. How would I like to be so grudgingly permitted to come if I was in her place? Phyllis Graham Landreth, I am ashamed of you! Yes, I am.

SEPTEMBER 14. The wedding is over, and Linda has started with her husband for their far-away home, too happy in her new wifehood to feel much regret at leaving her home and friends. I can't imagine how she can be willing to go so far away with some one whom she has barely known a year. Of course I could have gone to the world's end with Sydney; but apart from my wifely partiality I really think he is ever so much more lovable than Linda's

husband, who is very nice, but it seems to me that after Linda has known Sydney all her life he would spoil all others for her. I don't see how any one could bear contrast with him.

We stayed two days after the wedding to help Aunt Pen arrange everything and pack up the things that she meant to bring to her new home; then we came back together. Now that the excitement of the wedding preparations is over Aunt Pen feels completely tired out and decidedly nervous in consequence.

She did not like the arrangement of the furniture in her room, and Sydney had to alter it before she would go to bed.

I suppose I was tired too, and inclined to be cross, for I had to struggle with myself to keep from showing any annoyance, and I was inwardly provoked notwithstanding I acquiesced pleasantly in the change.

I have always been proud of being thought sweet-tempered, but I am beginning to suspect that it is because I have never had any provocation to ill-temper. I shall have an opportunity to find out now. I was a little disappointed to find that, although I had written the invitation to Aunt Pen myself, she evidently does not consider that I have any part or lot in the matter. She looks upon the house as Sydney's, and never thinks that if I had wanted

to be unamiable I might have objected to her sharing it with us.

I see one thing very plainly: if I am to be happy now, and if I am to feel kindly towards Aunt Pen, I must not look out for slights nor be jealous of the greater affection she has for Sydney. I think I shall try to live the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, and then there will be harmony in the house, for there is not any danger of a disagreement between Sydney and Aunt Pen. She admires and believes in him so thoroughly that if he propounded the theory that the earth has the shape of a pyramid and revolves around upon its apex, she would devoutly credit it and look at him in wonder at his superior knowledge. Surely our mutual love for Sydney ought to be a link to bind us together.

SEPTEMBER 25. Oh, dear, I am getting so ill-tempered! I feel as though I had a frown upon my forehead all the time. I bristle up over every little thing, and I don't believe it would be any worse to vent my vexation sometimes than to keep it continually pent up. I am discovering some new trait in myself every day of whose existence I never dreamed before. I find that I am intolerably jealous both of Sydney and of my place in the house. I had meant to be very generous with Sydney, and

though it is one of my greatest pleasures to walk to church with him on Sunday, yet I had privately determined to insist upon surrendering my place to Aunt Pen.

While I was up stairs putting on my hat the first Sunday, I heard the front-door open and shut, and looking out the window I saw Sydney and Aunt Pen starting off together. It was just what I had meant to insist upon, and yet, because I had not had an opportunity to suggest it myself, I had a hurt, angry feeling and did not feel at all in the mood for going to church.

I was to play the organ that day, so I had no time to indulge my temper, which was fortunate, for I have learned that hurt feelings magnify their injuries if they are allowed too much sympathy. After church I had to try over the evening hymns with the choir, so naturally Sydney did not wait for me, but went home with Aunt Pen. That was right, and yet I could have shaken myself for feeling slighted and forgotten. I have great need to grow in grace, or I shall let myself become so warped by my selfish, jealous nature that I shall be wholly unlovable.

OCTOBER 20. I have not let myself write before because I would only have poured out a long list of grievances, and I did not want to

do that; but to-night I cannot keep it all pent up any longer. I am so unhappy! I could not have realized how much difference Aunt Pen's coming would make in our sunshiny little home and in Sydney. I begin already to feel that I am unnecessary here, and that if I should go away no one would miss me at all. I found housekeeping a very difficult task when I had Aunt Pen to please instead of Sydney. Nothing was right, and the contradictory orders that Margaret received drove her to the very verge of distraction and ill-temper. Aunt Pen inquired the price of everything that came on the table, and wanted to know the amount that we used, and I was sure she was making estimates of our weekly expenses.

One day she said to Sydney,

"Sydney, do n't you want me to take charge of the housekeeping? I can manage far more economically than Phyllis does. Her head is so full of everything else that Margaret does about as she likes, and things are wasted dreadfully. It worries me sick to see things going on this way."

I was sitting on the back porch with my portfolio and could not help hearing what Aunt Pen said. What would Sydney say to this cool proposal?

"Well, I suppose it would be a very good

plan if it doesn't make any great difference to Phyllis," assented Sydney; "and I expect you would enjoy it, Aunt Pen, for it would seem more like home to you to be at the head of things. I will talk it over with Phyllis tonight."

For the first time in months I was thoroughly indignant with Sydney. I could not have believed that he would calmly assent to a proposition to depose me from my place at the head of the house. I had already voluntarily surrendered my place at the table, for I could never make Aunt Pen's tea right, and I preferred letting her pour it out herself; but now I was to be pushed aside altogether. Oh, why had I ever let her come? I resolved not to speak about the matter to Sydney until he mentioned it to me, but I felt sore and indignant. It hurt me, too, that Sydney did not notice that I was not as affectionate as usual the rest of the afternoon and did not seem to miss my usual caresses. I am a perfect barometer myself in regard to people's moods, particularly Sydney's, and I should know in a moment if he was vexed with me; but sometimes he is rather obtuse, and doesn't know when I am annoyed until I give vent to my vexation.

At bedtime when we were alone in our room he broached the subject by saying,

"Do you really enjoy housekeeping, Phyllis? I know of course you prefer our own home to boarding, but what I mean is, do you enjoy having the care of everything and the general management? I have fancied it was not very pleasant for you when an experienced old house-keeper was watching you."

"Indeed I do enjoy it," I said warmly. "Of course it does make it hard to know that my very best does not satisfy Aunt Pen, but still I love to know that I have charge of your comfort."

Poor Sydney was silent. My enthusiastic answer did not give him a very good opportunity to make his proposition that I should resign the reins of government.

"Aunt Penelope would be very glad to take all this care off your shoulders," he said at last. "You know she has always been used to the management of a house, and I think she would be happier and more contented if she could attend to the housekeeping matters, and that would leave you free for your writing and other things."

"Do you wish me to give everything up to her?" I asked. "If you will be more comfortable in any way, or if it would make you happier, I am willing to do it, but not otherwise."

"We have been very comfortable with your

housekeeping, dear," Sydney replied; "but if you want me to speak plainly, I must confess I would be a little happier if there was not so much occasion for Aunt Penelope to find fault; and if she had the management of the domestic affairs there would be very little for her to come in contact with you about. I will not urge you to this unless you are perfectly willing, but I do think we would both be happier."

"Very well then, you can tell her to take charge of your house," I answered in constrained tones from the depths of the pillow.

Sydney was evidently relieved that I had yielded so easily, for if I had refused to assent to the proposal he would have had a conflict with Aunt Pen, who would have insisted that I must give up if both she and Sydney were agreed against me. I am afraid I would be very obstinate if any one undertook to compel me to give up, and no doubt if Aunt Pen had set her heart upon having the house, and I had as firmly determined to keep it, it would have been very unpleasant for Sydney.

There was just one little gleam of comfort in the dull misery which kept me awake in tears long after Sydney had bid me good night and was asleep: I would be free from my anxiety about the expenses, and give up the hopeless task of keeping within my allowance. If Sydney

did not care whether I was in my rightful place as his wife, neither would I care. Home was no longer the delightful place it had been, and a little more or less disappointment did not matter.

The next morning after breakfast Aunt Pen took up the reins I had dropped, and all day long there was chaos in the kitchen while things were being rearranged to suit her ideas of convenience. She is a model housekeeper, I will admit, but I am tempted to wonder sometimes whether housekeeping does not become an idol to her. I verily believe she attaches as much importance to the existence of a speck of dust anywhere in her domain as she does to a real sin, and she thinks the aim of a woman's life should be to dust, cook, and mend. She keeps me cross and hateful all the time, and I do not feel at all like my old self.

I am tempted to be irritable even with Sydney, and I am angry at him continually because he does not take up the cudgels in my behalf when Aunt Penelope reprimands me as if I was a small child. He warned me before she came that it would not do for him to interfere, but still I can't help expecting him to take my part, and I am childish and unreasonable often enough, I know. I feel as if Sydney and I were gradually growing apart, and I can no longer be as attract-

ive to him as I used to be in the old days when I could always be sunny and bright. I will not complain to him of all the little slighting things that Aunt Pen says to me, and I don't wonder that he thinks I am touchy when the first reproofing remark that she makes before him brings a cloud over my face.

There is one thing that I am glad of: that it is not Sydney who is made unhappy. I would rather be miserable myself, for I love him too well to want him to be in my place. If Aunt Pen and I were not as different as two people can possibly be, we might be friends, but we are perfectly incomprehensible to each other. I cannot understand her cold, undemonstrative, self-contained nature, and I suppose I am a mystery to her. If when I have been irritable she would let me throw my arms around her neck and kiss her while I told her I was sorry, I would not be cross half as often; but she barely endures a kiss when she is going away on a journey or some great occasion of that kind, so I know it would annoy her more than my original offence if I broke out into uncalled-for caresses when I wanted to atone for any misbehavior.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN UNHAPPY SUNDAY.

NOVEMBER 3. This is communion Sunday, and I am at home alone while the others are at church. I am so wicked that there is no use in trying to be good any more. Things are going on from bad to worse with me all the time, and I don't know how I can endure this life much longer. Last night when I came home from preparatory lecture I went up to my room for a little time of self-examination and meditation. I put Aunt Penelope's failings out of my mind entirely and considered only my own share in the matter. Why could I not be a little more patient and forbearing, even if her age and infirmities did lead her to be a little petulant and irritable sometimes? I came to the humiliating conclusion at last that selfishness was the root of all my troubles, though I had never known how strong a hold it had upon me.

If I had the charity which St. Paul commends I could bear all things patiently, for that love "beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," and above all "seeketh not

her own." If my heart was filled with that charity I should not feel so aggrieved if I met with occasional slights or rebuffs, but should bear it patiently and sweetly and let it be a help instead of a hindrance to me in my Christian life. These little troubles should bring me nearer to God instead of driving me away from Him as I too often let them.

If only somebody knew how hard it is for me to be set aside and ignored, and I was conscious of loving sympathy all the time, I think it would be easier; but I feel so alone! I do not realize as I might that God cares for all these petty troubles, and though if I had a great sorrow I should go to Him for strength, yet I struggle on alone with these little burdens until they accumulate so that my strength is exhausted. I knelt down and prayed till the bitterness that had filled my heart was soothed into peace. I saw things in a different light, and the fault seemed to lie at my door instead of another's. I knew that I was disposed to fancy unkindnesses and then brood over them until I had magnified them into undue proportions; and no doubt I often misconstrued speeches and actions which resulted from thoughtlessness rather than unkind intent. When Aunt Penelope loved Sydney so dearly, could I not bear with her a little for the sake

of my love for him? Was it such a great thing to overlook small grievances now and then? Some day, when those busy hands were folded in their last rest, should I not be glad that I had not emptied them of these cares in which she delighted, merely to gratify my desire to be at the head of my home?

Another thought came to me too that helped me. God had sent me this discipline: it was what I needed most or I should not find it so intolerable. Perhaps there was some lesson that I was to learn in this school that I could never learn in any other way. Did I not love my Heavenly Father enough to yield willingly and submissively to his guidance, remembering that he never could err, and that his plan for my life was infinitely wiser and better than any plans I could make for myself? Ah, it was a small enough return to make for the mercy which had been extended towards me even in the days when I knew not and heeded not the infinite love that watched over me.

Before I rose from my knees I felt that love had taken the place of bitterness in my heart, and I was ready to begin afresh with Aunt Penelope and give her a daughter's tenderness and patience.

I went to sleep happier than I had been for weeks, and awoke determined to put my

good resolutions into practice. Generally I don't mind acknowledging that I am in the wrong and asking for forgiveness, but it is very hard to humble myself to Aunt Pen. I had been so sullen the last week that I felt as if I really owed her an apology; so as soon as I went down stairs this morning I said quickly, before my courage had time to fail,

"Aunt Penelope, I'm sorry I've been so cross lately. I'm going to begin over again and be real good to you if you will let me."

If she could only have said some little kind thing to me then I should really have loved her; but I don't suppose that she realized for a moment how much it cost me to say these few words.

"I'm sure I hope it will last," she said rather severely, looking at me over the top of her glasses. "You make everybody uncomfortable with your temper, and I should think Sydney would be afraid even to make a suggestion, you fly up in such a tantrum when anything is said to you. You always go by fits and starts at everything. I wish you could remember that you are old enough to lay aside your childish nonsense and act like a woman."

My good resolutions were vanishing like the morning dew as I listened, and I am afraid I should have made some sullen answer if Syd-

ney had not entered the room just then. As it was I sat down to breakfast with a clouded face which grew more overcast every moment. It did seem as if Aunt Penelope was unusually trying, for every remark she made to Sydney contained some allusion to me, or I fancied it did, which ruffled me still more.

Sydney remarked upon the excellence of the bread, and Aunt Penelope answered,

"It would n't be good if it was left to Margaret's making. Nothing is really good in a house where everything is left entirely to the servant and the mistress is taken up with other matters. Constant vigilance is the price of comfort."

"Yes," Sydney remarked absently, as he drank his coffee serenely, apparently oblivious of the fact that Aunt Penelope was casting slurs upon my housekeeping.

As he extended his cup to be refilled a tiny rip in his sleeve caught Aunt Penelope's eye.

"Sydney!" she ejaculated, "is that actually a rip?"

"Yes, I think it ripped last night," Sydney answered. "I felt it give way while I was preaching. It will not show, I think, it is such a small rent."

"But it is a disgrace for you to wear a torn coat into the pulpit," remonstrated Aunt Pen.

"People will think you are sadly neglected. I see I must take your clothes in hand myself and attend to their being kept in repair, since it does not seem to be your wife's affair."

"Sydney, if you had spoken of it to me last evening I should have mended it at once," I said coldly. "I can hardly be supposed to know whenever a thread gives way without being told of it."

"*You should* know," interposed Aunt Pen. "It is the first of a wife's duties to see that her husband's clothes are kept in proper order, and you should know for yourself what condition they are in and not wait till you are asked before you take a needful stitch. Though I am not supposed to mend Sydney's clothes, I shall be greatly mortified to think of his going into the pulpit with that rip in his coat, and I should think you would feel so too instead of resenting it."

"It doesn't often happen, does it, Phyllis?" asked Sydney good humoredly, trying to soften the effect of Aunt Pen's reprimand.

"It never should happen," said Aunt Pen, "particularly when Phyllis has none of the other duties of a wife to fulfil."

By a mighty effort I kept back the angry reply that trembled on my lips, but my heart was full of anger as we rose from the table.

How could I go to church and sit at the communion-table when my thoughts of Aunt Pen were bitter, unforgiving ones? Perhaps I might even yet conquer my evil passions, and I resolved to seek the solitude of my own room and prepare for the service.

Taking from the shelf a little book which has often helped me, I turned to leave the room. Aunt Pen glanced at it as I passed her.

"If you had a little more 'Practical Religion' in your daily life instead of carrying it about in your hand, I think it would be a great deal better for you."

This was the last straw, and I could not keep silence any longer.

"Perhaps I might have if you were not continually saying bitter, unjust things to me," I cried passionately. "I do not see how you can find it in your heart to come into my house and make me perfectly wretched in it."

"Phyllis!" said Sydney, in a voice of grave reproof, and choking with wrath I rushed from the room, slamming the door behind me.

Through the open transom I caught Aunt Penelope's voice as I fled up stairs.

"My poor boy! How can you ever be happy with such an unbridled—"

I did not hear the rest. I did not want to. I closed my door sharply by way of addi-

tional emphasis, and throwing myself on the bed burst into a perfect tempest of sobs and tears.

I could not, would not, endure this wretchedness another day. It was too intolerable, and surely God did not expect it of me. Why should I give up everything and let my life be made so miserable? Sydney did not sympathize with me; he surely could not love me, or he would see how much I had to bear. He had not said a word to ward off all Aunt Penelope's unkind speeches to me at the table, and yet as soon as I had taken up the cudgels in my own behalf, he had actually reproved me. If I could only go away and leave them together, for it was very evident that nobody loved me or wanted me here!

The first bell was ringing for church, but I could not check my tears, and my head throbbed painfully as the result of my sobbing. I heard Sydney's step ascending the stairs, and I hid my flushed face in the pillow. Oh, if he would only come and take me in his arms, and tell me he knew that I had had a great deal to try me that morning, and that he was not angry with me for my irritable speech! Just a word of love would melt my anger and make me penitent; but I had too strong a sense of having been unjustly treated to bring myself to speak first. Sydney

could see how wretched I was, and if he loved me he would try to comfort me even if I had done wrong.

He did not speak for some moments after he entered the room, and when he spoke at last it was only to say,

“ You will be late for church, Phyllis, unless you begin to get ready at once.”

“ I am not going,” I answered in smothered tones.

“ Why not?”

“ Because my head aches, and I don’t feel fit to go,” I replied; then as Sydney was about to leave the room, I felt as if I could not bear to have him go without a reconciliation, and I entreated,

“ Please kiss me good-by, Sydney.”

As he leaned over me I clasped my arms around his neck and burst into renewed tears.

“ O Sydney, I am so unhappy! Don’t you care?”

“ Of course I do,” he answered gravely. “ But you must remember you make others unhappy too by being so ready to take offence. Can’t you learn to make a little allowance for Aunt Penelope’s way, and let things pass once in a while? It makes it very uncomfortable for me to have you both at swords’ points all the time.”

"It is only once in a while that I ever do say anything," I answered. "I stand things until my nerves and temper are all worn out, and then I can't keep still any longer. You are not fair or just to me to blame me for everything, and if you loved me you would be sorry for me instead of being so ready to blame. I could not treat you so; and even if I did think you were in the wrong, and saw you as miserable as I am now, I would only think how I could best comfort you. I don't believe you love me a bit. You don't care for me or my happiness half as much as you do for Aunt Penelope's."

"Now you are talking childishly, Phyllis," Sydney answered, looking annoyed. "It is time for me to start to church, and as you are in such an unreasonable mood I might as well go, since you only want to reproach me for the unhappiness you bring upon yourself. You are not at all like my bright, loving little Phyllis of a few months ago. Good-by. I hope your head will be better soon."

It was a very cold kiss that he gave me, and I felt more unhappy than ever as I heard his footsteps descending the stairs. In a few moments he would start to church with Aunt Penelope and I would be left alone to my wretchedness.

Of course I was not like myself; I knew that

as well as Sydney; but could he not see what had altered me? It seemed too cruel that this continual trial which I was bearing for his sake should make him love me less instead of more, when I needed the comfort and help of his love so sorely.

If he would only sympathize with me and tell me how much he loved me when I conquered my resentment, it would be such a help; but he never seemed to notice when I did well, and had reproof for me when I failed. Of course he did not know of the continual nagging to which I was subjected, or he might appreciate my temptation to irritability more, for I would not be childish enough to take all my little grievances to him. I know, too, that many of Aunt Pen's speeches that are most unendurable to me would not sound particularly trying if they were repeated to any one else. It is the way in which she says them that aggravates me beyond endurance, and I know I am very sensitive to blame.

If I have done wrong and deserve reproof I do not resent being told lovingly of my fault, but this criticising of everything I do or say is growing intolerable.

There is no use in trying to be good, for I cannot feel like a Christian. I meant to begin afresh to-day, and yet I have failed miserably.

Sydney is out of patience with me, I am out of patience with myself. It is comforting to think that God's patience and forgiveness never fail. How can I teach my boys this afternoon, when my heart is overflowing with evil feelings? I must pray for grace to subdue my temper again, but unless I keep prayerful watch of myself every hour and every moment I shall fall again.

CHAPTER XX.

A YEAR'S CLOSE.

DECEMBER 1. I have made up my mind not to write any more grievances in this book, for it is mortifying to see how many pages I filled the last time I wrote with a childish recital of my wrongs. I am trying now not to think of the unpleasantnesses and disappointments of my home-life, but to let my mind be filled with other things. Not that it is growing any easier or that I am becoming better. Scarcely a day passes that the tears do not come or that I do not rush up to my room again and again and pray with all my might to conquer my temper. I am growing more irritable every day in spite of my best efforts, and though I cannot expect Sydney to love me as he once did, when he sees only my many failures, I am glad God can look into my heart and that He sees that I do love Him, miserably poor and weak as my love is, and unworthy of his acceptance. I am sure I realize the tenderness and patience of his love more every day, and it may be that he has allowed Sydney's love to be weaned from me that I may cling closer to him, and not put my dependence upon human affection.

I have a great many interests outside of my home to absorb my thoughts, and God is filling my hands with work to do for him. I wonder now how there could ever have been a time when I sought in vain for something to do for him. I am so glad he can use me, for my own Christian life is so weak and imperfect that I am not fit to be an instrument in his hands for helping others. My love for my boys and their affection for me is a comfort to me, and I enjoy my work among them greatly. Three of them have already come to their Saviour and learned to know and love him, and I think many of the others are interested. I find time almost every day to spend a few minutes with my poor old sick woman, and when I am with her my own troubles seem small in comparison. I have my writing, too, and it helps to keep me from brooding over little annoyances.

I wrote a serial story last week, a trashy one, I am ashamed to say, but it was the only kind that would be accepted by the magazine for which I wrote it by request. It was accepted and promptly paid for, and now I shall be able to carry out a plan for Christmas that I have had in my heart for some time. I suppose I ought to use the money in paying all my bills and returning the loan, but I can do that a little later, and I have a hope that if I can gratify one

of Sydney's great wishes it will revive his old love for me, and he will realize how dearly I love him. He has wanted a bookcase with glass doors to protect his books from dust ever since we have been housekeeping, and I know too of a certain set of commentaries upon which he has set his heart. This money is sufficient for both purposes, and I can have a handsome bookcase with the commentaries placed in his study as a Christmas surprise. I want to give each of my boys a Bible for a Christmas gift. I am so glad I have some way of earning a little money so I can do these things to make others happier. My own life is such an unsatisfactory one just now that I like to do all I can to make others happier; it makes up to me for some of my home disappointments.

I wish I could quite settle the question in my own mind whether it is right or not to write such stories. I asked Sydney, and he said it was a matter for me to settle with my own conscience, and I find it is pretty hard to come to a decision upon the subject. There isn't anything really wrong about this writing. Of course I would not write one of these stories full of sensationalism and tragedy; in fact my knowledge of villainy is too limited for me to make a success in that style of literature; but this story I have just disposed of is certainly not one that

will make any one better for reading it. It is a sentimental love story, and I should not like to have any one know I wrote it.

I am afraid the readiness with which I can dispose of such a story is a temptation to me to think that there cannot be any harm in it; but if it is wrong I hope I shall see it clearly. I have an order for another story of the same kind, and if I still am undecided upon the subject I shall write it after Christmas. I have prayed over the matter, but I am afraid that I am a little biased by my inclinations and cannot wholly surrender myself to God's guidance.

I do want to be wholly consecrated and devote every power and talent to God's service. I know that my daily life does not seem to be that of a Christian; it is a life full of failures and mistakes; but God knows how hard I try to keep close to Him and how sorry I am for my weakness and sin. Not the most tender and patient earthly love can compare with the illimitable patience and tenderness of God's love, and I realize more and more every day how precious this Friend is who only comes the closer in time of special need.

I feel Sydney growing away from me every day, and that is the hardest of all for me to bear. I know just how faulty I am, but in the dear old days his love for me blinded him to all my im-

perfections; or if he saw my failures, he would advise and help me so lovingly that I felt more assured of his affection than ever.

I do not blame him for his altered feelings towards me. He has the greatest respect for Aunt Pen's opinion and always yields to her judgment; so he could scarcely help looking at me through her eyes, and she sees nothing but wrong in me.

If she would only alternate her rebukes with ever so scanty a meed of praise sometimes, I would be more patient; but I cannot feel that I never do anything right and praiseworthy.

If I could bear this discipline as God means me to, I can see how it would cure me of every lingering trace of selfishness and self-conceit, for I would not seek to be gratified in my desire for appreciation, nor would I feel so hurt at being undervalued and misunderstood. I do mean to try to learn the lesson which God has set me, but sometimes I grow so impatient that I wish I might put it aside and choose some easier task.

I wonder whether any one ever had so much to contend with as I have in myself. I do mean to be good and submissive and loving, and yet I am all the time acting in just the contrary way. I can hardly understand myself, so it is not strange that I am incomprehensible to others.

Outside of my home-life I sometimes think I have nothing more to wish for. I am busy and happy, and every one is so kind to me and considerate of me. The one thing that I cannot have is the one thing that I sigh for most, after the usual fashion of human nature. I long beyond anything else to be the queen again of my little realm and feel that I am all in all to Sydney. How can he love me when I can never do anything for his comfort or happiness, and when I can hardly be bright company for him in the little time that we are together each day?

Two or three times my heart ached so at the thought of his love slipping away from me that I threw myself into his arms and begged him passionately to give me back the full measure of love that had been mine at first, or I could not bear it. My tears only annoyed him, and he bade me be sensible and not expect extravagant demonstrations all the time, or I would make us both wretched.

I wonder if he would really be content to have me love him in the self-contained way that Aunt Penelope does. Sometimes I withhold my usual caresses to see if he will miss them enough to remind me of them, but I only make the forlorn discovery that he does not observe their omission, while I cannot get along without them.

In the pulpit Sydney satisfies me perfectly. It is not only because I love him that I am so proud of him and think him eloquent, for every one else speaks well of him, and the rapid growth of the church is a practical proof of the good he is accomplishing.

After all he is my husband, my very own, and though his love may be weaned away from me *he* cannot be taken from me, and I am happy in loving him.

DECEMBER 25. This has been a happy Christmas. Sydney was so delighted with his bookcase and the commentaries that he has been almost like his old self to me; and while Aunt Penelope was busy with her preparations for dinner I had a delightful morning in the study with him, helping to arrange the books and indulging in a good deal of ridiculous nonsense that would have shocked Aunt Pen if she had been there to see it.

I had so many kind remembrances from friends that I felt as if this was a very lovely world to live in, and even Aunt Pen relaxed a little and seemed to feel more lenient towards me than usual. If she could only love me a little I would not mind giving up everything to her as I do. I do not think it would be possible for her ever to entertain any very cordial feeling towards me however, for her strong

jealous nature could not endure any one who was in danger of sharing her idol's affections with her. I will not sigh for what I cannot have, but will make the best of her occasional kindly moods.

JANUARY 1. I had a headache yesterday afternoon and came up to my room as soon as supper was over, hoping that after a time Sydney would join me and we might spend the last hours of the old year together. I was disappointed in this however, but perhaps I spent the time more profitably after I had conquered my first hurt feeling. As the last hour passed slowly away I spread out the record of the past year, blotted and stained as it was with sin, and prayed that the blood of Christ might wash it clean. I have never before felt how utterly helpless I am in myself to walk a step alone, but now I know that I must cling closely to the Hand that guides me if I would not fall. If I could only banish every vestige of self-will from my nature and be content to be led, how much sorrow and need for repentance I should save myself.

I am content for God to empty my heart of earthly happiness if he will fill it with his love. I will not ask Him to lighten this cross which seems so intolerably burdensome; I will only ask Him to give me strength to bear it with

rejoicing since He has appointed it. It is so small a thing to do when His wonderful pitying love bears so patiently with all my sin and lightens the smallest burden that I carry to Him. I know that this new year, whether it brings happiness or sorrow with it, will be part of God's plan for my life; and so I can enter upon it trustfully, for infinite wisdom has marked my future, and I would not, if I could, choose my own way.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

MARCH 4. I have been trying to come to a decision which will involve some self-sacrifice upon my part, and as usual I am humiliated at discovering how little real consecration I have when it is put to the test. Our missionary society has been struggling along in a hopeless sort of way for years, just on the brink of dissolution continually, though it has not yet quite succumbed. The average attendance of members is perhaps four, sometimes one or two more, occasionally fewer, and the exercises have hitherto consisted in singing a hymn, in asking whether any one has brought anything to read, a little general conversation upon household matters, and then in conclusion another hymn.

The president had moved away from town, and in spite of my protests of inability I was elected to take her place. If I am interested at all in anything I cannot help throwing myself into it with my whole heart and soul; so after my usual fashion I began to ponder whether it might not be possible to get up a little interest in our meetings.

My inexperience was in my way, for unfortunately I had never attended any missionary meetings in my life but our own dreary ones; still I wondered why it might not profitably be conducted somewhat upon the plan of a literary society to which I belonged. There the exercises were not left to chance, but were carefully planned for; why should not the exercises of a missionary society be of equal importance?

There were several members of our society who contributed, but never attended a meeting. In order to insure somewhat of an attendance, I asked one to play the organ for the next meeting, another to bring an appropriate solo to sing, a third to prepare a short paper on a missionary topic, and a fourth to read a bright little leaflet. I felt now as if I had made tolerable provision for an interesting meeting, but there was one matter for me to settle with myself.

I felt sure that one of the secrets of the failure of our society was that God's blessing was never asked upon the meetings and that prayer was never offered. How could we expect to be prospered if no one was willing to make a little sacrifice of self and lead in prayer?

I had often thought of this, but never felt any sense of personal responsibility in the matter, as I was not the president of the society and had no part in the opening exercises. Now that

it was in my hands, I felt that I dared not omit prayer any longer; and yet how could I bring myself to pray before others? If any real good was to be accomplished by these meetings, some one must be willing to ask God's blessing upon our work, but I could not ask any one else to take up the cross I was not willing to bear myself. I knew that none of the ladies in our church were in the habit of praying before others, and it would be just as great an effort for them as it would be for me, yet we must have prayer.

It took me at least a week of prayerful effort to bring myself to a decision, and I am sure I never dreaded anything in all my life quite as much as I did this prayer. I am ashamed to confess this even to you, old journal. It seems incomprehensible that it should be such a burden for a Christian to pray before others, and I am sure it must be some form of selfishness that prompts me to shrink from it so. I will not yield to my cowardice, however. I will at least make the effort, and if I break down and fail utterly, it may be that God will use my weakness to serve him. To-morrow is the day for the meeting, and I have hard work to keep myself from drawing back even now. If it was a usual thing and was expected of me, I fancy it would be easier; but my self-love is fearful that some

one may not understand my motives and may think it is a bit of ostentation on my part. Oh, what mean motives and thoughts mingle even with the work I would do for the Master!

MARCH 6. Perhaps it was my foolish dread of the meeting that frightened me into a severe nervous headache, but I awoke yesterday morning with my head throbbing so painfully that I could not raise it from the pillow. Usually these headaches prostrate me for the day, and my first thought was one of relief that now I should not be able to go to the meeting, and so would escape the prayer I had so dreaded offering. As soon as I realized that this was my feeling, I determined that if it was a possible thing I would not give up to my indisposition, but would force myself to go and perform the duty that was awaiting me there. I would not let myself creep out through this loophole of escape, though the exertion would cost me twice as much as if I was well. The meeting was to be at two o'clock, so at half-past one I got up and dressed and went slowly down stairs.

I crept wearily around to the church, wondering whether my strength would be equal to the effort I had to make. Ten ladies were present, and that was a most encouraging number. All through the opening hymn my heart went up to God in a cry that he would give me

strength, but all the time I felt as if I must shrink back now that the moment was approaching so quickly. Will anything ever be as hard again for me, I wonder, as it was then to suggest that we should hereafter open our meetings with a prayer for God's guidance and blessing! Such a weak, broken, imperfect prayer as it was! My voice trembled so that it was hardly articulate, and tears choked my utterance. I am sure it was a relief to every one when it ended, but I felt a great peace fill my heart as we proceeded with the meeting. I could believe that God had accepted my poor effort and that it was not in vain.

The preparations for the meeting had been carefully made by those to whom they were assigned, and every one seemed to enjoy the exercises. When we adjourned nothing was said to me about the evident effort it had been for me to open the meeting with prayer, but I knew from the kindness with which each one spoke to me that sympathy and not criticism had been with me. When the reaction from the temporary excitement was over, I could hardly drag myself home again, I felt so weak and exhausted and my head ached so furiously with every motion.

Aunt Penelope met me in the hall.

"Why, where on earth did you come from!"



WHITNEY DELL

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she exclaimed. "I thought you were in bed with a headache."

"My head does ache," I answered, "but I had to go around to the missionary meeting."

"What was the special need of your going there if you haven't been able to do anything else to-day?" Aunt Penelope asked.

"I had to open the meeting," I replied. "You remember they have put me in Mrs. Sloane's place."

"Well, upon my word, Phyllis, I believe you would get up from your death-bed if you had a chance to be conspicuous or take a leading part in anything. You have always told me that you were not able to get out of bed when you have your bad headaches; but I suspected that if you only had a sufficiently strong incentive you could keep about. I suppose you hardly expect to have your supper sent up to you, now that you are able to go down town."

"I don't want any supper," I answered, too utterly wretched to argue with her, and I was thankful to gain my own room again and rest my burning head upon the cool, soft pillow.

Even the injustice of the motives she had imputed to my unusual exertion did not trouble me much just then, for my pain was too great. I was glad to fall asleep as the twilight was gathering, and not waken until this morning.

Free from pain, I had leisure for other feelings, and for once I broke my rule of never complaining to Sydney and told him of Aunt Penelope's injustice.

"Now don't you think that is hard to bear?" I asked defiantly, as he did not answer at once. "It is these miserable little injustices that make my life so wretched."

"But I don't see why you let it make you wretched," he answered. "You did not make that effort merely to please Aunt Penelope; it was for a higher and a better reason; and so I cannot see what difference it makes to you whether she appreciates your motive or not. Why do you brood over all these remarks and let them trouble you so, Phyllis? You know it is Aunt Pen's way, so why do you pay any attention to it?"

"Because I can't help it," I answered angrily. "It is very well for you to say, 'Don't mind it,' when she just bows down to you and adores you all the time; but if she treated you as she does me I think we should hear something else from you. I am foolish ever to expect any sympathy from you. You are always making excuses for Aunt Pen, but you don't care whether I am wretched or not. I am bearing all this for you, instead of claiming my rights and privileges as your wife, which almost any

one else would do, and this is all the return you ever make for it. I feel sometimes as if I could not stand it. Aunt Pen is taking all your love away from me and you don't care anything more about me."

"My dear Phyllis," said Sydney, putting down his brush in an annoyed way, "you seem to forget entirely that it was your proposition that Aunt Penelope should make her home with us, and I will not urge it for a moment if you find it so intolerable to have her in the house with you. I should think this house might be large enough to shelter her for a few years; but if it makes you so wretched, you can ask her to leave us at any time. You are the mistress of the house, so of course she must go if you say so. The matter is entirely in your own hands. As for saying that she is making me love you less, that is absurd and unjust. I love you as much as I always have, though of course I cannot feel pleased with you when your temper is so uncertain and you grow angry on the smallest provocation. I am growing tired of these continual complaints of your unhappiness and I do not wish you to say again that it is for my sake that you are enduring anything. Put an end to Aunt Penelope's home here as soon as you will, if it will end these complaints," and he left the room.

I was more angry than ever as I completed my toilette, angry at Sydney now as well as at Aunt Penelope.

It was very easy to tell me that I might send Aunt Penelope away, but that solution of the question was entirely impracticable. She had no other home open to her, and little as she loved me, I could not have enjoyed my home if I had known that I had bought it back at the expense of her happiness. She was old, and liable to need the care of relatives, and I could not be happy alone with Sydney knowing that I had made her last years unhappy by separating her from him.

I did not really want her to go away. For her own sake, for the sake of the love she had for Sydney, I was willing to give her a place in our home; but I did want Sydney's love and sympathy with all my heart, and yet I somehow was continually widening the gulf between us. All day long I was sullen, even towards Sydney; but after supper when he was sitting alone in his study I was too heart-hungry for a little love to stay away from him any longer. I went into the study and came up behind him.

"Sydney," I said, clasping my arms around his neck, "I am sorry for the way I spoke to you this morning, indeed I am. Will you forgive me?"

"I am always forgiving something," he answered, "but I suppose I can again."

"Oh, darling, don't say it so grudgingly! Forgive me freely, as if you really did. I cannot bear to have you angry at me, indeed I cannot. I am a great deal more unhappy than you are, when I am hateful. Please, if you do love me, say so just once as if you meant it, to comfort me."

"Little goosie!" but he drew me down on his knee and I nestled contentedly in my resting-place. "I do forgive you and I love you. Is that enough?"

It was fully enough to make me very happy, and I did not speak or move in the fulness of my content until half an hour later Aunt Penelope's footstep was heard upon the stairs; then I sprang up and came up to my room, for I did not want my happy mood to be jarred upon by a word.

I will try hard to be more patient and not let myself get so angry at everything Aunt Penelope says. I know it is foolish and only makes me unhappy. If I could just laugh all her little criticisms off, and not bury them in my heart and brood over them, it would be so much better and wiser. I do not see why I let my nerves get so upon edge that every little thing makes them quiver with pain. I do not under-

stand why I am so quick-tempered and irritable, when scarcely an hour passes that I do not go to God for help to conquer myself. I never suspected the depths of evil in my heart until now, when I meet with so much to call it out. What should I do if I could not go to One who is mightier than I for help?

CHAPTER XXII.

AFTER THE VACATION.

JULY 3. I have almost determined never to write on these pages again, for I do not seem to have anything but complaints to write; and yet it is a comfort to me to come to you, dear old journal, and pour out my heart, when I cannot to any one else. A record of my life these last few months would be of continual struggles and almost continual failures, and I know I am not growing in grace; if anything, my nature is becoming dwarfed and warped. I am glad that my failures do not weary God's patience, for no human love can bear with me. Aunt Penelope is going away with Sydney this summer, and I have accepted an invitation to spend the vacation with a friend at the seashore, so I am really in hopes that I shall come back rested and refreshed, with my nerves and temper in better condition.

Sometimes I think my irritability is as much the result of disordered nerves as of wickedness. I have been so very busy this spring. I have written a good deal, and my work in the church keeps me very busy, I find so much that I want

to do. Sometimes I know I am undertaking too much for my strength, but it is hard to be prudent and hold myself back when there is so much to be done.

I can hardly realize that my boys are the ones whom I was almost afraid of at first. They are doing so well, and leading such upright, manly lives, that I am very proud of them. The room that I helped them to fit up for their own use has become an evening resort for all the young men in town, and it accomplishes more real missionary work than I could have thought possible.

Some of my boys are always there to take charge of the room, and they strictly enforce a rule which they themselves made, that nothing should take place there of which I would not fully approve if I were present.

This rule covers drinking, smoking, swearing, and even rough slang; and as the boys appreciate the comforts of this bright, homelike room, they are generally quite willing to conform to it.

Sunday afternoons, after Sunday-school is dismissed, I go down there with the boys and one or two ladies, and we have an impromptu praise service. We had an old organ given to us some months ago, and although it has almost outlived its usefulness, yet it answers very well

for the use we make of it. We have an hour of bright singing, letting any who are present select their favorites among the "gospel hymns," and the boys seem to enjoy it very much. Even those who do not sing like to come and hear the others. If it does not do any perceptible good, it is at least an hour better spent than in idling about upon the streets; and perhaps after a time some of these outsiders may be interested enough to come to Sunday-school and church. At present they are very shy of any invitations.

All of my boys but four have now come out as Christians, and I pray for them daily that their love may not grow cold, and that they may not fall away from the Master to whom they have given their young lives with all their possibilities of usefulness.

I feel every day my unfitness to try to help others when I am so weak myself; but I have learned that I never come so near to God myself as when I carry some one else to him in prayer. How my ambitions and plans for my life have changed since I wrote the first pages in this journal! Then I fancied that all that could gratify my highest ambition would be to win fame; now I am "content to fill a little space if God be glorified."

This will be my first parting from Sydney if I do go away alone this summer, and I wonder

sometimes whether I can bring myself to it. I think the chief thing that determined me was the thought that perhaps absence from me might awaken his old love for me, and he would find out that I was not altogether unnecessary to his happiness, though it does seem so now. I do love him so that I cannot bear to have him estranged from me, and I would do anything in the world to win him back again. I must lack tact, for I always fail when I make any special effort to bring out his love for me. I weary him if I shower caresses upon him, and yet I dare not withhold them altogether, lest we should drift farther apart from each other than ever. Life is a puzzle in many ways.

AUGUST 8. I did manage to say good-by to Sydney and come away alone, and I am childish enough to cry myself asleep for him nearly every night. He is very kind about writing, and his daily letters make me happy because there is always some expression of love that I can read over and over again and hug to my heart.

I like to think that God orders even the little things of my life as well as the great things, and I think perhaps he led me here to have a question settled for me that I have not been able to decide for myself.

Last night when I accompanied my friend to

church a strange minister occupied the pulpit and I felt as if he had been sent there with a message for me when he began his sermon.

It was exceedingly interesting to me and I listened eagerly to every word, although the majority of his hearers looked listless and uninterested. When he had concluded there was no longer any doubt in my mind whether it might or might not be right for me to write those trashy stories. I knew that it was wrong—nay, wicked—to use any gift that God had given me in such a way as to do harm rather than good; and before I left the church I had resolved that I would never again write a word upon which I could not ask God's blessing. I had a serial story nearly completed in my trunk, but I resolutely burned it to-day. It cost me a little sacrifice to make up my mind never to write anything trashy again, for there is always a ready market with prompt payment; but I am glad that the right and wrong of the matter have been decided for me, and I feel as if this stranger had been sent with a word just for me. It gives me a comforting sense of being in very near relations to God to believe that he orders these little events of life which might seem accidents to some.

AUGUST 12. To-day I went to the ladies' prayer-meeting, which is so well attended that

it is not abandoned even during the summer months. I enjoyed it very much, it was such a new experience to me to hear earnest voices in prayer, while the speakers were not restrained by any self-consciousness or thought of others from communing freely with God. I was especially attracted by the leader of the meeting, a sweet-faced woman with soft, gray hair rolled back from her forehead and a singularly bright and winning manner. I was delighted when I found that I had an opportunity to meet her after the service, and we soon discovered that we had many mutual friends that were a bond of sympathy between us at once. I am strangely drawn towards her, and I hope I shall learn to know her well while I am here.

AUGUST 26. My visit is drawing to a close, and I am so glad to think I shall see Sydney again soon. I wonder if he is counting the days and looking eagerly forward to seeing me, too. My visit has done me much good, and I feel as if I would never again be as nervous and petulant as I was the last few weeks before I came away. I think I needed the rest and change. Now when I go back rested and refreshed, I shall have no excuse for ill-temper. Perhaps as Aunt Penelope has had Sydney to herself all this month, she will be generous and let me enjoy his society more.

SEPTEMBER 3. We are all at home again once more, and it was a delight to me to see Sydney and hear him say that he had missed me. Aunt Penelope was tired last night and went to bed directly after supper; so Sydney and I had a long, delightful evening together, talking over our respective doings during our month of separation.

If I can only be bright and good-tempered, perhaps Sydney will love me as dearly as he used; and then I can be happy notwithstanding anything. I mean to watch for the first beginnings of ill-temper and pluck them up as mercilessly as if they were noxious weeds.

OCTOBER 15. I think I can truthfully say that I am learning to conquer my temper a little. I do not grow angry quite as often as I used, and I have learned to keep my tongue under control even when I am sorely tempted to speak hastily.

In one way I am happier than formerly: I feel myself nearer to God, and there is always joy in a sense of communion with him. I wonder whether I should cling to him so closely if my path was not so beset with trials and temptations. Surely they are God's angels, disguised though they may be, if they lead me to him, and I will not pray that they may be removed.

DECEMBER 10. To-day my class of boys are

an unbroken band for Christ. For the first time they all sat down at the Lord's table, and my heart sang a pæan of thankfulness as I realized that they were all safe, not one astray. This one day of happiness would be ample reward if I had not already been paid a hundred-fold for anything I have done for them.

MARCH 8. Another long lapse since I wrote last. I am so tired and tried with my continual temptations that sometimes I wish I could give it all up. Aunt Penelope has not been well at all this winter, and naturally has been more nervous and easily annoyed than at other times, and so things have seemed almost unendurable. I am sorry for Aunt Pen. I know very often it is her nerves rather than her heart that speak so irritably, and yet I am just unreasonable enough to let it annoy me. To add to our troubles there has been perpetual insurrection in the kitchen, and we have had a succession of incompetent girls, with lapses in between when Aunt Pen has insisted upon doing the work herself with my help, which I am afraid is of but little use to her, there is but such a small part which she will trust me to do.

It has been a hard winter, and I feel as if I had less than ever of Sydney's love to help me bear it. He is changing so greatly that sometimes I feel that I hardly understand him. It

would be enough to spoil any one to be indulged in everything and never suffered to give up anything for another's comfort.

If I am in the rocking-chair when he enters the room, Aunt Penelope expects me to offer it to him; and if I do not, she will go into the parlor and wheel out an easy-chair for his accommodation. I love him enough to willingly give him the best and most comfortable of everything, but I cannot bear to see him accept it as a matter of course. There is always an array of private dishes around Sydney's plate, little delicacies which he is not expected to divide; and though he used to remonstrate and insist upon sharing them, he is content now to take them for granted and calmly make way with them.

It isn't that I want them, dear old journal, but I do want my husband to be perfect in all things, to be one of the noblest and most unselfish of men, and I cannot bear to see him growing selfish and unmindful of others.

Sometimes I think Aunt Penelope hinders him in his church work; for she is so afraid of his over-exerting himself in some way, or making some effort that he does not wish to make, that she dissuades him from doing many things that I think are expected of him and would make him a better pastor.

It may be that I imagine these things because there is some jealousy in my heart that I am not loved and shielded as Sydney is; but I honestly think it is only my love for him that makes me grieve to see his character marred by any imperfection, when I know how loving and unselfish he can be when he is his natural self.

If I could only look forward to the end of this uncomfortable life; but there is apparently but one termination to it, and that is Aunt Penelope's death. I must love her down in the depths of my heart, for I cannot bear to think of that. I would rather have this discomfort, these continual pinpricks, all my life, than wish for a moment that she should be taken away from us in that way.

I know just how my heart would ache with remorse for every unkind thought, word, or speech, and I would wish her back again a thousand times.

No, I cannot wish that this would end, since that is the only possible termination. I will wish rather that I may grow better, more patient and unselfish, so that I may make more allowance for the infirmities of age and be more tender and forbearing.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OPPRESSED WITH DEBT.

JANUARY 10. It is months and months since I have touched you, dear old journal, and I had almost forgotten about you, when I came across you to-day as I was packing my trunk. I grew so tired of writing down the history of such uneventful weeks, and I have been waiting for something of more importance to record.

I am going away now for a little visit, for I do not feel as if I could bear this constant strain any longer. It is a little humiliating to know that I am absolutely free to come and go, and that it makes no difference to Sydney or Aunt Penelope whether I am at home or not; but at the same time it is somewhat of a relief, for it would be almost intolerable to find that I was tied here when I am so eager to go away.

I am so tired out that I feel as if even one more day would be more than I could bear. I am going where I can just *rest*, as far as any excitement or annoyance is concerned, and where I can go on rapidly with some writing that I am anxious to do.

I want to spend a month or six weeks away

from home, and then perhaps I shall feel like myself again. I am in trouble too, and I want to free myself from it. It is trouble which I have brought upon myself, and I deserve all the anxiety it is costing me, but it is helping to make me feel used up and weak. Some time in my childish days I learned a little couplet, which returns to my mind again and again:

“Oh, what a tangled web we weave
When first we practise to deceive!”

Long ago the filmy, invisible strands began to weave themselves about me, and I did not break myself free from them; now they are like iron cables, and I feel as if I could not break them. Little by little, so gradually that I did not realize what I was doing, I have let myself become involved in a perfect labyrinth of debt, and all at once my eyes are opened to it.

It began long ago, when I first let the house-keeping bills run behind, and I have never really overtaken those first debts. I have earned money enough, but there have always been so many occasions for present outlay that I never saw my opportunity to devote my money to settling past accounts. Not of course that I have let those bills run all these years; but while I was paying them I let other accounts run; and I am afraid I have a fatal facility for running

into debt anyway. Now all at once I have come to a point where it seems necessary to settle up a good many accounts within the next month, and I find that I must get to work in good earnest to earn some money.

I have too many interruptions here at home to accomplish much, but I hope to do a great deal by going away. I have earned enough within the last year to pay my bills twice over, but there have been many temptations to spend the money as I received it. I have done wrong in being generous instead of just, but very often I have needed money in my work among the poor or the boys, and it has been far easier and pleasanter to supply the funds myself than to ask of other people's reluctance. I have supplied myself with every addition to my wardrobe, and that is not a small item of expense, for Sydney likes to have me dress tastefully; and then it has been such a delight to me to gratify his desire for books and other things he has expressed a wish for. It has really been thoughtlessness instead of deliberate wrong-doing, but I see plainly now that it was not right, not honest indeed, to respond even to a call of charity with other people's money, and yet that is virtually what I have been doing; for while I owed this money I had no right to use any that I earned for other purposes.

I have resolved never to go into debt again for anything, and now as speedily as I can I will extricate myself from these meshes in which I am tangled.

I feel sometimes as if Sydney and I knew less of each other's doings than others know of us. I am scarcely ever alone with him except perhaps for a little time in the evening when we are both sleepy and have but little to say, and I feel that I know nothing of his plans and work save that which any of the congregation might know.

I wonder if it would ever be possible for us to grow together again, so that we might hold heart-to-heart communion with each other and make our interests one.

I am bearing such a heavy burden, and I feel that he knows nothing of it, and that I could not claim his sympathy even if I tried to tell him. The heaviest part of my trouble, the growing estrangement from him, he could not understand, or he would feel it himself; and I know by past experience that I could hardly hope for forgiveness if I told him of my indebtedness.

I cannot bear to feel that we are living such separate lives, but I cannot help it. I love him as dearly as ever, but any demonstrations of my love are tiresome to him, my society is not particularly attractive any more, and his comfort is

provided for without my intervention, so how can I win his heart again? I am growing more hopeless every month that the old-time love can ever return, and life seems very dreary without it.

JANUARY 15. I am enjoying the perfect rest which I am having here with my friends. It is such a new and pleasurable sensation to find that my company adds anything to any one's happiness. All the self-conceit I ever had has been well crushed out of me the last year or two, and I am positively grateful for the smallest kindness any one can show me. A kind word from even a child is grateful to me, I have grown to feel myself so undeserving of any attention.

I am so anxious to begin my writing, for every day counts now, when the time is so short before my day of reckoning; but thus far my head has ached so continuously that I cannot think. I must have reached the limits of my strength before I left home, for all my energy has gone and I am content to lie and listlessly rest all the time. If my mind was only at ease I could soon recuperate, I know; but my debts hang over me like a terrible nightmare. If my head would only stop aching so that I could go to work; but I do not know what I shall do if I cannot get to work soon.

I *must* have the money. I cannot borrow it, and it would be of no use to go to Sydney for help, for in the first place I do not think he has it; and besides, it may be that I am unjust to him, but I do not know that he would give it to me even to relieve me from this mental strain. Perhaps he has more love left for me than I give him credit for, but I have the instinctive feeling that he is the last one in the world to whom I could go in this strait.

FEBRUARY 3. I have been too miserable even to write in your pages, dear journal, and I am too weak and wretched to do more than scribble a few lines now. I am in a sort of apathy of despair. Day after to-morrow I have to meet a note, and I have not a dollar towards it. I do not know of any one to ask, for the only friend who might lend the sum to me has just invested all her money in a new enterprise, and is consequently almost *impecunious* herself.

I will not even mention my difficulties to the friends with whom I am staying, for I know they cannot help me and it would only grieve their kind hearts. I did ache so for some human sympathy that I wrote a long letter to dear Mrs. Ainslie, from whom I hear very frequently, telling her of my wrong-doing and the punishment it had brought upon me. I know she will be sorry for me and will write me a

loving, sympathizing letter. Our acquaintance last summer speedily ripened into a deep, warm friendship, which I trust as I trust but little love now-a-days.

When Mrs. Ainslie loves any one she loves just as I do, with all her heart, and it is an instinct with her to show her affection in little loving ways and words. I wonder why every one does not do the same. It seems to me like suppressing all the blossoms of a fruit tree and leaving only the leaves and rough stalwart trunk, to drop caresses out of one's life. I wonder if any one ever loved to be loved more than I do. I am greedy for it.

I have had so strong a feeling that by my own sin I have brought all this anxiety upon myself that I have not felt as if it would be right to ask God to help me. It seemed to me that I ought to suffer the punishment of my wrong-doing in just this way; but to-day I was so in despair with a sense of my own helplessness that I could not resist going to Him with a cry for help and forgiveness. I know that He is all-powerful and could save me from the results of my wrong-doing if He will; and yet as these are not the days of miracles my weak faith does not look for relief.

FEBRUARY 4. My head aches so that I cannot think connectedly and I am in the depths

of despair. To-morrow Sydney will have to know all my trouble, and I fancy he will never forgive me or love me again. Perhaps I am going to die, and then he will be glad that I shall never trouble him so again. I am burning with fever, my head is hot, and I can hardly endure this mental distress. I have not deserved that God should help me, although indeed I did not think how wrong I was. If Sydney would only love me I could bear his severest displeasure, for I deserve it all; but he does not love me and I am all alone in my trouble.

MARCH 1. To-day I am able to sit up for the first time since I made that last entry. I have been ill and am just beginning to regain my strength. I was so utterly wretched and despairing when I wrote those few lines, and I could not see any way of escape from my difficulty open before me. That evening Mrs. Ainslie came to me. As soon as my despairing letter reached her she started, and when I saw her dear face bending over me I clung to her with the feeling that some one loved me if I was wicked and in such trouble. I could scarcely believe her words when she lovingly insisted that she wanted me to show my love for her by letting her relieve me from this strain, and that I should use her purse to pay

all my indebtedness and go home with her for a rest from all anxiety and care.

I could not resist her loving offer, though it hurt me to think of accepting such a kindness from her. Half in a dream I wrote the few necessary letters inclosing the money which freed me from my chains, told Sydney of my change of plans—that I intended to spend the rest of my visit with Mrs. Ainslie, as I was far from well—and bidding my friends good-by went away with her.

At first I could not free myself from the anxiety that had been haunting me. I could not really believe that the burden had been lifted and I had nothing to do but rest; but it dawned upon me gradually, and I luxuriated in the quiet and the loving nursing I received. It seemed to me like a little bit of heaven after my loveless home-life, and my weakness only made me enjoy it more. I had been on the verge of brain fever, and if the reaction from the strain had not come just when it did I might have been dangerously ill. Overwork, the constant strain upon my nerves for months, and this growing anxiety concerning my debts, had been too much for even my strong constitution.

I am not afraid that I shall be tempted to go into debt again for ever so small a sum, for my lesson has been too severe; and if it had not

been for Mrs. Ainslie I should still be suffering from it. I only wish I could tell Sydney all about it and know that he forgave me. I mean to some time, when I think his love can stand the test.

I am to go home next week. How I wish I could stay longer in this peaceful retreat where I have love enough to heal my sore heart and all the little kindnesses shown me that only love can devise or execute.

I thank God hourly for this true friend whom He raised up for my hour of need. She is such a devoted Christian that I feel as if I could sit at her feet and learn new lessons of love and faith in our Heavenly Father, and the sweetest hour of the day to me is the time when we kneel together before retiring and she asks God's blessing upon our friendship.

It will be a change to leave this calm life, where nothing ever annoys or tempts me, and go home to renew my old struggle again; but I have gained strength, both physical and spiritual, by my sojourn, and I must not shrink from any cross God has given me to bear for Him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CLEAR SHINING AFTER RAIN.

MARCH 12. At home again! I had dreaded leaving Mrs. Ainslie's house; but as the train rolled into the station, and I saw Sydney's dear face with a look of expectancy upon it, I forgot everything but my pleasure at being with him again. My head ached a little, and I was tired with my journey, short though it had been; but I was so anxious to be with Sydney this first evening after my return that I determined to stay down stairs and make myself as pleasant as possible.

As soon as the table was cleared Aunt Penelope brought out the chessboard, and as Sydney drew his chair up beside her and began to arrange the pieces, I knew I might as well go to bed as sit there in silence watching a long game.

I was disappointed, but I knew it would be selfish to deprive Aunt Penelope of her favorite game, so I said good-night and came up stairs. I was a little homesick for the bright, loving home-life from which I had just parted, but I would not yield to this feeling. I unpacked my

trunk and went to bed, soon to fall into a dreamless slumber.

MARCH 29. I think I have learned the secret of happiness at last. Yes, though Aunt Penelope has not changed in the least, and though I cannot feel that Sydney loves me as I would have him, I am happy. I do not mean that I am never tempted nor tried by these little annoyances, but I have learned that nothing is too small to carry to God, and one cannot feel unhappy or friendless with such a loving, sympathetic friend always near.

I remember, too, that not the tiniest of these pinpricks comes to me by chance, but is sent by God for a wise and loving purpose; and surely I would not refuse to submit to anything He sends me, even if it may not be what I would choose myself. I have great compensation for all I bear for Him. In the place of the human love I have craved I have a deeper realization of God's great love, and a sense that poor and unworthy as I am, I have a share in it; and I have times of being drawn very near to Him in prayer, so near that I almost feel as if I could see Him, the sense of his presence is so strong.

Is not this ample compensation for these petty trials and disappointments? I can see now that they are indeed God's ministering angels to me, though I rebelled against them at first

and grieved over my marred plans. God never makes any mistakes, even though in our short-sighted human wisdom we cannot always recognize the perfect symmetry of his plans.

APRIL 10. We have been in a whirl all day, and now that the excitement is over I can hardly realize how much has happened. At nine o'clock this morning a telegram came to us from Linda's husband saying that Linda was very ill. If Aunt Penelope was willing to undertake the journey she could have an escort all the way, for a brother officer would start at four o'clock, and Linda wanted her if it was not too great an effort.

Sydney and I both begged her not to go, for it was such a long, fatiguing trip that we did not think she could endure it; but she was quite determined and insisted that she was perfectly equal to it, so we had to yield to her.

Sydney rushed into town to get her ticket and see the gentleman who was to be her escort, while I helped Aunt Penelope to pack her trunk and make her preparations for the trip. I found I really loved her, for my heart ached at the sight of her distress about Linda, and I dreaded the fatigue of the long trip for her. It would have been a serious undertaking had she been ten years younger, but I comforted myself by remembering that her indomitable will could

carry her where her strength could not. I think the real tenderness and affection with which I bade her good-by pleased her, notwithstanding her dislike to demonstrations. Sydney went back to town with her to see her safely started on her way, and while I am sitting here alone writing I really have a lonely feeling. I am anxious about Linda, and can hardly wait to hear again from her husband, and then I don't like to have poor Aunt Penelope start off on that long journey. I would really rather have her sitting here in her rocking-chair by the fire, though I know she would be finding fault with me for something if she were. I am not rejoicing in my freedom, which will certainly last some months, as much as I should have supposed. I am glad I have been more patient of late, and I hope that down in the depths of her heart there may be a little love for me.

APRIL 18. Linda is much better and quite out of danger, and Aunt Penelope is safely at her journey's end. We were glad to receive such good tidings, for we have been anxious to know how she would bear the fatigue. It seems very pleasant to have Sydney again, and I am trying my hardest to make him so comfortable that he will be satisfied with my care, and to be as attractive to him as possible. Did ever wife try so hard to win her husband's heart

before, I wonder? He is always kind to me, but I miss the love that would prompt tender thoughts of every comfort and little tokens of his affection for me.

JUNE 1. The days have been passing by so pleasantly and uneventfully that I have not had anything to record, until to-day a message flashed over the wires from Montana that brought us sorrow. My eyes are full of tears as I write. Poor Aunt Penelope, who has always been so active that she could not bear to have any one else wait upon her, or do anything that she was able to do for herself, has been stricken with paralysis. One side is useless, and she can articulate but imperfectly. I am sure she would have chosen death rather than this enforced helplessness and silence, and I think I could almost be willing to take her place if it would free her from this fate, I am so sorry for her. My heart is full of remorse for every unkind word I have ever spoken to her and for every hard thought. Poor dear Aunt Pen! If she was only here with her beloved Sydney, where I could care for her and nurse her! but she is so far away that we cannot even hope to see her. I wonder when she will be able to come home again.

SEPTEMBER 1. Aunt Penelope will never be with us again; her home will have to be with

Linda now during the remaining years of her life. How could I have felt so bitter over my little trials when it made her so happy to be with us and to minister with her own hands to Sydney's comfort! I am glad she could never see into my heart and know how much bitterness and unkind feeling was in it. If I had ever made her yield her place to me, I think my heart would break with remorse now. It made those last days of activity and usefulness brighter than they would otherwise have been, and if I could have looked forward a little, I should have been so glad to yield to her, instead of feeling so bitter over it.

Sydney and I each write to her twice a week, long letters filled with bits of news that we know will interest her; and I can truthfully tell her that I miss her and wish she could be back in her old place.

I am enjoying the housekeeping very much now, and think Sydney enjoys his home as much as ever. I am praying very earnestly that God will give me his love again, that I may feel that my precious husband's heart is mine. I can see why it was taken away from me. I should never have learned the height and depth of the wonderful love of God as long as I felt myself wrapped in this human love which was my most precious earthly treasure. It may be that God

will give it back into my keeping, now that I have learned the lesson He set me, and if He does I shall hold it gratefully as a gift from His hand.

I am glad I am so strong and well, and can always be Sydney's companion whenever he wants me to share a task or a pleasure with him. I am afraid he would not love me even as much as he does now if I were not so overflowing with life and high spirits. I do so want to be everything to him.

NOVEMBER 4. The very last time I opened your pages, old journal, I was exulting in my strength and health, and since then I have been laid aside almost entirely. I thought that upon my health depended my chances of securing Sydney's love, and when I learned that it might be months before I could be anything but an invalid my heart sank within me. I could bear the confinement, the giving up of all active duties, if only Sydney would not grow weary of me. And yet this was God's answer to my pleading for more love, though I should never have chosen this way of winning my husband.

Last evening will always stand out in a white light in my memory. It was a new starting-point in my life. I was lying on the lounge in the twilight sobbing bitterly as I

thought how little I could be to Sydney now and how slender were the chances of my being to him all that I had wished to be. In spite of new hopes that had dawned upon me, I felt as if I had lost my husband. I thought Sydney had gone out for the evening, and I was surprised when I heard him come in presently.

"Don't light the lamp, please, Sydney," I asked as I heard him open the match-safe, but I was too late. A light flashed up even as I spoke, and Sydney saw my tear-stained face.

"Why, Phyllis, what is the matter? Are you ill?" he asked, lighting the lamp and looking anxiously at me.

"No, I am only unhappy. Please put out the light, Sydney, and come and talk to me in the twilight."

He sat down by me and put his arm caressingly about me.

"It was too bad in me to go off when you were sick here alone and leave you to get the blues," he said. "What is it, dear? Anything that I can cheer you up about?"

"I am afraid you will love me less than ever when I tell you what a complaining, good-for-nothing wife you will have," I answered with a little sob in my voice.

Not even to you, dear old trusty friend, can I speak of the next half-hour. The old love

came back again, deepened and solemnized at the thought of new ties to bind us together.

"Darling, will you forgive me and let me make a new beginning?" Sydney asked tenderly after we had been silent a time, each busy with our thoughts. "I have always loved you, but I confess I have not shown it by my neglect of the little things which are the brightest part of life to a loving heart like yours. I have not appreciated what you have borne so bravely for my sake; and because we are differently constituted, and criticism and unkindness do not trouble me, I forgot that it could be the keenest of trials to your sensitive nature. I am selfish, darling. It has been part of my life-training to think first of my own comfort, and poor Aunt Penelope has developed this trait in me more and more every day, though she only erred through her love. You must be my helpmeet, darling, and be brave enough to help me cure myself of this. Do not let me be selfish and thoughtless without telling me of it. I know you have been unhappy since Aunt Pen came to us, and yet I know your kind heart does not regret the sacrifice now. I shall try to atone for my share of your unhappiness, and though I know I have not deserved to keep your dear love, can you tell me that you will forgive me and that I have not estranged you?"

"Oh, Sydney, I have never loved you less for one moment," I answered. "I have something to ask your forgiveness for. Let me tell you everything, so that there will be nothing hidden in the life we leave behind us to-night. Promise that you will forgive me when I tell you. I do not ask that you will not be angry with me and blame me; I deserve that; but I want to know that you will forgive me at last."

"There is nothing that I could refuse you forgiveness for, my wife," Sydney replied, and I told him the story of last winter's despair from the very beginning to the end.

"My poor little Phyllis! And you would not come to your own husband to help you in your trouble! Darling, I cannot have been to you what I should have been or you would not have feared me. There is need for mutual forgiveness. I was wrong, too, or there never would have seemed any need for concealment. You are fully and freely forgiven, dear wife; and now that we are beginning over again we will have the same interests, and no more of the spirit of mine and thine which has caused all this sorrow for you. If it had not been for Mrs. Ainslie, perhaps I should not have had you now!"

It was all over now, all that dull aching sense of being unloved, and we sat long in the

moonlight-flooded room talking of the future and what it was to bring to us.

My heart was filled to overflowing with a deep solemn joy and a sense of God's great goodness to me. He had crowned my life with His mercy and I had not a wish unfulfilled. He had been better to me than my prayers or desires, and there was no good thing left for me to desire of Him.

All my prayers now should be that He would fit me by His grace for what life held in store for me and make me worthy of its sacred trust.

I cannot realize that it is but a little while since I was so unhappy. Now I am supremely blessed in knowing that I am a loved and honored wife, and that I have a husband who is worthy of my truest love.

CHAPTER XXV.

PATHS OF PEACE.

DECEMBER 31. I must make one more entry in your pages this year, dear old journal, for I want to speak gratefully and lovingly of all that it has brought me.

People think that I am patient because I do not complain that I have to lie so quietly week after week with no strength for any of the active pursuits in which I formerly delighted, but in reality these are the happiest days of my life. I could not have imagined more tender devotion than Sydney shows towards me. Before I have time to express a wish it is gratified, and he never wearies of sitting beside me and trying to while away the time for me. He is womanly in his quick sympathy with every pain, and weak and helpless as I am, he clings to me with a tenderness that I never saw in him before. Even my hungry heart can ask nothing more, and I am too happy to mourn over any deprivations when so much has been vouchsafed to me that is more than abundant compensation.

And more cause than this for happiness

have I. In the hours when Sydney is in his study or engaged in church-work I have no time to grow lonely, for dear Mrs. Ainslie is spending the winter with me and will be with us for some months. I have no opportunity to miss the tender love and care that a mother could give me just now, for she is at once a mother and a most true and helpful friend to me, and I feel that I owe her more than I can ever repay by my most devoted love.

Mrs. Dearing often comes in to see me, and her brusque manner is so softened and subdued that she is really lovable, and I enjoy talking with her. Sometimes she begins to tell me what she owes me; but I tell her that the happiness is mine as well as hers, and that by letting me share my hope and love with her she gave me one of the greatest joys of my life. My boys come in to talk over their plans and hopes with me, so I do not feel as if they were growing away from me because I am laid aside.

Best and highest of all my joys is my sense of my Father's love and nearness to me, and I have plenty of time for communion with Him in these quiet hours.

How can I be aught else but happy when I have everything to make my life bright? Each year has revealed more of God's goodness to me,

and I feel that I cannot be grateful enough for all my mercies. The past has been full of His goodness and I need have no fear for the future, for I know, whatever comes, "He doeth all things well."

JULY 14. The first entry in the new year, though it is already half gone. I have been too ill to think of writing, though I have had much I would like to have recorded in your pages, dear old friend.

One month ago I passed tremblingly along the hard path that seemed to lead my shrinking feet down to the very gates of death; but there I found this wonderful joy, this sacred responsibility of motherhood, awaiting me, and I forgot all the anguish and fear in the blessedness it brought me.

My loving eyes wander from this page to look at my darling as she slumbers peacefully beside me, my fair little daughter, our dainty Penelope; and I wish that I had a new song put into my mouth, that I might praise the Lord for His goodness to us. Not one thorn is in my path now. My life is radiant with love, for even far-away Aunt Penelope, when she heard of her little namesake, feebly articulated a message of love for me, and I cherish it tenderly because now all is good-will between us.

I might tremble sometimes at the thought of my unfitness for the responsibility of training this precious soul for immortality, but she is not left to my weakness, for I know where to go for strength for every need, and God's strength will strengthen my feebleness; so I accept the joy of the present and will walk by His guidance through every step of the future. My beloved husband, my precious little daughter, my well loved friend: each one is so dear to me, and my heart can scarcely contain the flood of love which I pour out upon them; but chiefest among my gifts I thank God for the wondrous love that sought me when I was afar off and bound me to the cross with cords that will never break. Better than all my earthly treasures do I love their Giver, and I will hold them but loosely in my clasp, that I may never refuse to surrender them if He claims them.

This morning I came across my old journal, and Penelope, who was helping me rearrange some treasures in my desk, asked,

"What is that large book full of writing, mamma. Is it a story?"

I laid it aside for a quiet evening hour, and now when Sydney is bending over his desk, and Penelope, little Sydney, and baby Lilian are fast asleep, I have glanced it over with a heart full of mingled emotions.

Ten years ago I made the last entry. I could not have believed that time had sped away so swiftly had I not seen the date.

It has brought the past up vividly before me, those childish records of my little hopes and ambitions, my little triumphs and disappointments. Were those feelings once mine really? It seems almost as if I were reading pages from the life of another.

My eyes filled as I read on, and remembered how my passionate, impulsive nature had to suffer before I could learn the lesson of submission to God's guidance. I could recall my intense longing for my husband's love, which God saw best to deny until he had first filled my empty heart with love for Him; and now looking back over the lapse of years with the perspective that we need when we would look at God's dealings with us, I can see how wonder-

fully He guided me and led me through rough ways into the paths of peace. In the days of my girlish folly and waywardness, when I proudly thought my life was in my own hands, the Infinite presence never failed, but led me safely through all the quicksands which might have wrecked my life, and through this dear human love led me to divine love.

Even the mistakes that threatened to mar the harmony of our wedded life were but parts of God's plan for us and worked together for our good. More than I could have asked in my short-sighted wisdom has God given me: a home bright with love, a husband whom I honor and love with the tenderest affection, which I have no need to fear is not returned, these precious little ones to train for heaven, and abundant opportunity for constant service for my Master. My old ambition is not wholly ungratified. I shall never be a brilliant novelist nor a leader in the world of thought, nor do I sigh for that. Now and then I can dip my pen into life experiences and write something that may help a tired heart take courage; and I treasure the letters which have brought me assurance of that more than any praises from the press.

"All for Jesus" is my prayer constantly—my home, my loved ones, myself with every energy and power.

As I close this old record which has so many leaves from my life within its broad covers, I would inscribe, with a heart full of adoring gratitude, as the closing words upon this last page :

“The Lord is my Shepherd ; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters.

“He restoreth my soul ; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.

“Thou anointest my head with oil ; my cup runneth over.

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

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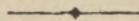
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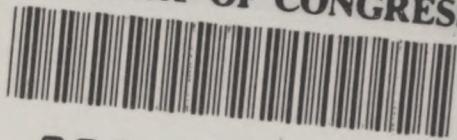
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